

S E R M O N S

ON VARIOUS

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS,

FOR DIFFERENT

SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS

OF

THE Y E A R.

By the late Reverend SILVESTER GOONAN, of the *City*
of *Limerick*.

D U B L I N:

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1798.

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THE SERMONS of the late Rev. SILVESTER GOONAN are published at the desire of his Friends and numerous Acquaintances: This may be considered as an evident proof of their merit, as they, in general, had heard them delivered by the pious Author. His very unexpected death,* at an early period of life, has rendered this a posthumous Work; and had he lived to publish it himself, probably it would appear more complete, and to a much greater advantage.

However, these Discourses are his own compositions, and are faithfully printed from his Manuscripts. They are the effusions of his heart, glowing with zeal for the salvation of his flock, whom he dearly loved, and truly served, faithfully fulfilling the duties of a good Pastor. It is to be hoped, that the Reader will profit of the Moral and Religious Instructions which they contain: if so, the ardent wishes of the EDITOR are fully accomplished.

* On the 14th of July, 1796, the Author having gone to his bed, seemingly as well as usual, died before the next morning. He was only in the forty-sixth year of his age. His death was greatly regretted by all those who knew him.

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S E R M O N I.

ON THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

For the First Sunday of Advent.

*And then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud,
with great power and majesty. St. Luke xxi. 27.*

WE all believe, and it is an article of our holy faith, that, besides the particular judgment to which we are summoned immediately on our parting this world, there shall also be a general one, in the face of all mankind; at which a full discovery is to be made of our thoughts, words, and actions. It is true, that at the first and particular trial, the state of the soul is determined by an irrevocable sentence: however, this general trial is far from being unnecessary, as will appear evident from a short exposition of the principal reasons commonly assigned for this great and dreadful event. First, the body partakes here below, with the soul, either in virtue or vice; it is an instrument either of good or evil, according to the good or bad dispositions of its companion; it is just, then, that it should share in her rewards or punishments. Secondly, Christ appeared on earth in the humble disguise of our humanity; despised and insulted in the course of his ministry, which he concluded by
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suffering a most cruel and shameful death : now he will come armed with power and majesty ; he will make those acknowledge him for their God, and their King, in whose eyes the cross was nothing but folly, and a subject of scandal. Thirdly, and lastly, in this world the just are very often left in a state of misery and oppression ; they are even traduced and calumniated : Providence seems to abandon them, while she showers down her favours on the wicked, who are courted and admired, and meet every where with marks of esteem and approbation. But now, to the great joy and triumph of the just, to the unspeakable confusion of the wicked, these disorders shall be fully repaired ; things must take another turn, and the just, who had not their comfort here, shall be blessed with all the joys that heaven can afford ; while the wicked, who wantonly abused all the goods of this life, shall suffer all the evils of the next. This general judgment is the subject by which the Church, on this day, prepares her children for the approaching solemnity of Christmas ; in order that the terrors of this last and awful scene, may rouse them into a salutary fear, and beget in them these dispositions with which we should all meet our infant Saviour. No subject can be better calculated for this purpose ; and whoever reads with attention the account given of it by the evangelists, must be alarmed at the great and wonderful truths exhibited to his view. The sun covered with darkness ; the moon putting on a bloody veil ; the sea swelling to an extraordinary height, and roaring with unusual rage ; the stars, which men beheld with so much delight, now terrifying them with strange appearances : in a word, all nature, in an agony, shall proclaim the coming of the Son of Man, in great power and majesty. The elements, that before offered themselves to the use and satisfaction of man, shall now turn against him, and revenge their Master's cause. These are frightful forerunners of something far more terrible!

terrible! Men shall wither away for fear! but how shall this fear be heightened, when they consider, that they must appear before that all-seeing Judge; from whom nothing can be concealed? Unhappy they, who come unprepared to this great trial! What would they not give for one day, for one hour, to regulate their accounts, and work out their salvation! But alas! it is too late; the night is come, when no man can labour, and a few moments will decide their eternal doom.

Christians, it highly concerns us all, so to regulate our lives, that, on the day of wrath, we may not be in the number of the wicked, but rather in the happy society of the just, who shall look up with confidence to their merciful Saviour, because their redemption is at hand. That you may be more effectually engaged to take your precautions, I shall endeavour to lay before you what the unhappy soul suffers on the great day of assizes, as well her interior trouble and anguish, as her exterior shame and confusion. In the first part you shall see her condemned by herself; in the second part you shall see her guilt exposed to the view of men and angels. *Luke xxi. 28.*

THE FIRST PART.

The soul must necessarily condemn herself, when she sees the number and enormity of her crimes; her unaccountable folly and ingratitude to her Maker, who is now to be her Judge. When a person who is not entirely lost to all sense of virtue and religion, commits a crime of a grievous nature, there is a something within him that reminds him frequently of his guilt; his thoughts are his torment day and night; when alone, he is uneasy and displeased with himself; if he goes into company, and endeavours by a variety of amusements to dissipate all care, a disagreeable monitor often breaks in upon him and embitters his pleasures. This monitor is what we call a guilty conscience,

a terrible executioner to those who are capable of feeling ; but unfortunately, the more hardened the sinner is in his vicious habits, the more he deadens its stings, till at last he becomes almost insensible to them. Besides, we very often form consciences of our own ; our passions raise mists before our eyes, and by our sloth and indolence become so powerful, as to bring over conscience to their side, and make it pronounce in their favour. Again, we have the example of others to encourage and support us ; we see them walk on securely in the same way with ourselves ; this makes us pleased with our situation, and by a fatal illusion, we think we may safely follow them. But at best, how little do we know of the state of our souls ? Perhaps, by the grace of God, we are watchful enough to avoid any great and flagrant transgression ; but, are we sure that our good works are free from infection ? Great God ! how many things are hidden from the eyes of man ; what a mystery is he to himself : but on the great accounting day our consciences will be cleared from their former blindness ; those things that contributed to hide us from ourselves, shall lose all their influence over us. The passions, which so often hurried us into sin, are now silenced and confounded ; the world, with all its charms, is no more ; and God, intent on satisfying his justice, shall give the unhappy soul a full view of her disorders. The sins of the longest and most vicious life ; the sins of thought, of word, of deed, and omission, with all their aggravating circumstances, shall start up, all at once, and rise in judgment against the unhappy sinner. Even those sins, which he never considered in that light, or, at most, looked on as natural effects of human frailty, and pardonable weaknesses, shall now present themselves in their true colours, and make him loudly condemn that self-love which betrayed him. Those shameful sins, which he could not be prevailed on to declare to one man, who

was

was tied down to secrecy by all laws, both human and divine, shall now appear against him to his eternal confusion. He has taken all possible precautions to hide them from the eyes of men, but they could not escape the all-seeing eyes of God; and now they shall be brought to light, as well as his most notorious and public offences. But, how shall he be confounded when he considers, that the principal favours conferred on him by his Maker, shall be turned into so many charges against him? God, in his mercy, has been pleased to call him to the light of the gospel, and to distinguish him, by this particular grace, from so many infidels who walk in darkness, and in the shades of death: he has admitted him to the sacred laver of regeneration, and by virtue of this powerful Sacrament, cleansed him from original sin, and made him his adopted son, and heir of the kingdom of heaven. He has frequently nourished him with the life-giving body and blood of his divine Son; he has invited him, by repeated calls and warnings, to his holy service; but the sinner has slighted all these favours; he has turned his back on the goodness of his Redeemer; and the means that were given him to save his soul, serve now to his greater condemnation. The Cross, the glorious standard of the Son of Man, that instrument of our redemption, shall remind him of so many profanations of the sacraments, so many abuses of the divine grace: it will tell him, that he was a Christian in name, only, but worse than many heathens in his conduct. And now, what are all the sufferings of this life, compared to the situation of this unhappy soul? Whatever afflictions a virtuous man may suffer, in this state of trial, his comfort is at hand; the testimony of a good conscience makes them light and easy; he knows, that the chosen servants of God are often treated in the same manner, and that by imitating their patience and resignation to the will of the Almighty, he will

will share in their rewards. But the sinner, whose eternal lot is to be soon decided, knows very well, that there is no comfort for him; he sees his guilt in its full extent; he must acknowledge, that the punishments to be inflicted on him, are the just consequences of it; the world with all its changes and revolutions, has disappeared; there can be no change nor revolution for him.

O Lord of mercy, how terrible are thy judgments! If one grievous crime is apt to plunge us into despair, even in this life, where the greatest reprobate may hope for mercy, what must be the sentiments of a sinner in the next, when such a multitude of sins stares him in the face; when he sees before his eyes avenging justice just ready to fall on him, and endless torments to be endured, as long as God is God. What shall the busy worldling now say for himself, who by several artifices and underhand dealings had acquired a considerable fortune; had made thousands starve in order to raise himself; had defrauded of their hire those that were employed in his service; and had been as much entangled in the cares of this life, as if there was to be no other for him? O my God! shall he cry out, in the bitterness of his soul, I have walked through hard and rugged ways, the goods of the world were the objects of my thoughts both day and night, and where is the fruit of all my labours! Now I see how foolish the wisdom of the world is! Had I devoted myself to your service with that zeal and ardour, with which I have served the world, I might now be a glorious saint. The man of pleasure, whose life was a constant round of sinful excesses; who, in the full career of his headstrong passions, ran down, as childish, whatever scruples came in the way to alarm him; who even endeavoured to persuade himself, that there was no God; that the end of man was like unto that of the brute; who gloried in publishing this impious doctrine to the world, shall find, to
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his cost, how terrible a thing it is, to fall into the hands of that living God, whose existence he denied. But surely, a man of his knowledge could not brook to fall in with the common notions of mankind; he could not rest, till he struck out a system of his own: but now, his system is overturned, and this perfidious servant must give his Master an account of the talents, which he so scandalously employed against him. Where are now the honours so eagerly courted by the ambitious man? In order to gain them, he has spent restless nights; he has cringed to persons in power; he has made use of base and degrading measures: in a word, he has done and suffered as much for false and transitory honours, as many of the saints did for the true and everlasting honours of heaven. Oh! how shall he condemn his cares and labours, so fatal to his poor soul just ready to enter into a miserable eternity! But these notorious sinners are not the only persons who shall have occasion to fear on the day of wrath; persons reputed saints in the eyes of the world, but mere hypocrites in the sight of God, shall cry out to the *hills and mountains to fall upon them*, Luke xxiii. 30. and to screen them from the vengeance of the searcher of hearts. Others, that lived in a kind of indifferent state, and would fain go to heaven at a cheap rate, will meet with a severe disappointment. In this life, they were unprofitable servants; they were like to that barren tree, mentioned in the gospel, which occupied the ground to no purpose; now that they are conscious of all this, they must know the sentence that awaits them. O merciful God! you, who wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live, grant that we may so clear our consciences, during these days of mercy, that through the merits of our Redeemer, we may have reason to expect a favourable sentence. Grant, O Lord, that the day of wrath, a day of sorrow and confusion to the wicked, may be a day of glory and
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and triumph unto us. How desirable then must our situation be; how different from that of the wicked, whose consciences denounce to them whatever is most alarming. But the Divine Justice is not yet satisfied; their crimes must be made public to all mankind; sentence must be pronounced.

THE SECOND PART.

If the bare consciousness of her guilt preys so much on the unhappy soul, we may easily judge what her feelings must be, when the history of her sins is published to all mankind; when she is separated from God, and from all that is good; and lastly, when she hears that dreadful sentence, which is to complete her misery! In this life, as men very often do not know themselves, so they remain unknown to others; in general, their discourse, their countenance, and their whole exterior, are so composed, as to conceal what they are, and to make them pass for what they are not. They have favourite passions and weaknesses to which they are unfortunately wedded; they know very well, that a discovery of them would either ruin their reputation, or render them contemptible; for this reason, they colour them over as well as they can, and shew a fair outside, while the interior remains foul and corrupt. But on the great accounting day, when *there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hidden that shall not be known*, Mat. x. 26. all these precautions shall be quite useless, and our guilt must appear in its blackest colours: not to one or two; not to a whole city or kingdom, but to all mankind assembled. What will become of those persons so jealous of their reputation, that they would almost die for shame, if one criminal connection, if one private sin, was made notorious, and dragged into open light? But, whatever it may cost them, they must

must suffer a great deal more; the just and the sinner will see through this abyss of iniquity, which was never founded before; and then shall the judgment of God be perfectly justified. What an odious figure shall the hypocrite make, who, under the mask of piety and devotion, kept up an inveterate pride, a censorious uncharitable spirit; who, in every thing that he seemed to do for the sake of God, sought nothing else but the esteem and applause of men? His life was a constant cheat; his pleasure was to deceive; but all his hopes are blasted for ever; the impostor is discovered, and he is beheld with all that scorn and detestation which he merited. But perhaps the number of his fellow sufferers makes this public shame and confusion more supportable. On the contrary, this, and every other circumstance, contributes to heighten his misery. Those persons, whom the sinner has involved in the same unhappy fate with himself, by his pernicious counsels, encouragement, bad example, carelessness and neglect, shall charge him with the ruin of their souls, and cry to the just Judge for vengeance against him. Even those wretched souls, to whose sins he has not at all contributed, shall look on him with the same horror, that they do on themselves. On the other hand, the just, whom he has so often traduced and calumniated, despised and insulted, oppressed and persecuted, shall stand forth against him, full of zeal for the glory of their Master, who was insulted in their persons.

And now the Son of Man will send his angels to pluck up all scandals out of his kingdom; to separate the good grain from the bad; the just from the wicked, O dreadful separation! What would not these heroes, who have been the admiration of mankind; these mighty conquerors, who seemed to change the scenes of this world as they pleased, but did not acknowledge the great God, whose instruments they were; what would they not give
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now for the last place among the elect? Men of great fortunes, high birth, founding titles; men remarkable for their wit and learning; for those shining qualities which the world admires, shall be placed on the left; while ignorant persons, who were reputed to be the last of mankind, to have nothing to recommend them, shall, by their charity, their humility, and the other gospel virtues; by their fidelity and exactness in complying with the duties of their state, be qualified to appear with confidence, and placed at the right hand of God. What a mortifying sight must this be to the wicked, who lorded it over the just in this life, and treated them with scorn and ridicule. In the book of Wisdom we find a lively picture of their feelings: *They will be confounded at so great a change; they will sigh and groan, and break out into these complaints: (v. 1.) We fools considered their lives as madness: we imagined, that their end would be without honour: we laughed at them, because they were so different from ourselves: they did not drown themselves, as we did, in the cares and pleasures of the world; they had futurity before their eyes, the thoughts of which we kept at a distance. And what is the consequence? Behold, they are ranked among the children of God, and their eternal lot is to be with the saints.*

And now, both the just and the wicked have their respective places allotted them, and are to receive their final sentence. Joy and confidence on one side, terror and despair on the other; the just shall look up with transports to their God, in whom they believed, whom they loved, whom they eagerly sought, and who is to be their eternal reward; the wicked, with downcast eyes, shall look towards the infernal abyss, just open to receive them.

But who can express what the just will feel, when their Redeemer, with an air of sweetness and majesty, shall address to them this loving invitation: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom*

kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Mat. xxv. 34. O happy sentence, that is to conclude all their labours and sufferings, and to introduce them to joys that are never to have an end! Then shall he turn to those on the left, trembling at the wrath and indignation of an offended God, and pronounce these dreadful words: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.* Mat. *ibid.* 41. What shrieks, what lamentations shall then be heard! These unhappy souls shall curse the moment of their birth, and themselves, the authors of their misfortunes. How they would wish to be annihilated, rather than to fall a prey to ever burning flames! but the sentence is passed; it admits of no mitigation, no appeal; go they must, and that without delay; a wretched immortality is to be their portion, in order that they may feel for ever the full weight of God's vengeance!

Christians! we know that we must all appear at this general trial. We likewise know, that the decision of it depends on the lives we lead at present. Let us then ask ourselves: Are our lives so regular, so edifying, so pure and spotless, that in case we were summoned this very moment, to stand at the bar of Divine Justice, might we reasonably hope to be placed at the right hand of God? Let us suppose, that, after an impartial examination, our weak and superficial discernment discovered nothing grievous; shall we be secure on this account? Oh, no! the great apostle St. Paul, was far from thinking so: let us hear his words,—*I am conscious to myself of nothing, yet am I not hereby justified: for he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* Besides, this life is a life of danger to the most virtuous; he that stands to-day, may fall to-morrow; we do not know if we shall persevere to the end, and yet, salvation is not to be had on any other terms. But, if we find ourselves guilty of those sins, one of which being sufficient to plunge us into everlasting misery, shall
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not the thunders of God's justice rouse us into a sense of danger? Let us not say, that we shall think of it another time; that other time is not at our disposal, or may never come; let us make sure of the present. Our Saviour declares, that he will come to us like a thief or a robber, when we least expect him. The best way to prepare for the time of his coming is, never to lose sight of it. Let us imagine, with St. Jerom, that we hear the last trumpet sounding continually these words in our ears: Rise, ye dead, and come to judgment. Let us pray, with St. Austin, here burn, here cut; O Lord, only spare me hereafter.

O God of mercy! who hast revealed these dreadful truths, to make us watchful and vigorous in your service, grant, that the terrors of your justice may sink deep into our minds; pierce our hearts with that saving fear, which is the beginning of wisdom, in order that fear may beget love, and that love may enable us to walk on cheerfully in the ways of your commandments. Then may we expect to be placed at your right-hand, and to hear from your sacred mouth these reviving words: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Mat. xxv. 34.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

ON SCANDAL.

For the Second Sunday of Advent.

*Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me. Mat.
xi. 6.*

HAD our Saviour uttered these remarkable words, a few days before his bitter passion, to prevent his disciples taking any scandal at the state of humiliation to which he was then reduced, the meaning and tendency of them would have been clear and obvious. But when we find that he expressed himself in this manner, in the first year of his mission, at a time when his fame was spreading abroad every day, when he was working such wonders as no one ever wrought before him: This, Christians, seems to give a mysterious air to the words of my text. At the same time, we know, that he is the Eternal Wisdom, from whose sacred lips nothing can fall, that does not challenge our highest respect, our most serious attention. Let us, therefore, consider the persons to whom he addressed himself, and the peculiar circumstances in which he spoke. St. John, who was then in prison, sends to him two of his disciples, to know if

he was the Messiah. This was a truth, of which the Baptist was perfectly convinced, to which he bore the most honourable testimony, even in his mother's womb. He therefore sent them, not for his own information, but for their instruction. Our Saviour immediately refers them to his miracles, which were his credentials from heaven. *Go, says he, and relate to John, what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them, and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me.*

Here, Christians, the difficulty lies: You will say, can any one be scandalized in the blessed Jesus? Is not his doctrine pure, his life holy? Are not his words and actions so many lessons to mankind? Do not his miracles evidently bear the stamp of the Divinity? But, do you not know, that the enemies of our Saviour, through their own malice and obstinacy, turned all this into an occasion of scandal and offence? The disciples of St. John had a share in the same guilt, though not in the same degree. They were jealous of the rising reputation of the Saviour, and of his superiority over their master. They also took offence at his not practising the austerities for which their master was so remarkable. They had, therefore, every right to apply to themselves these words, in which our Saviour closed his answer to them: *Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me.*

But, they who declared open war against the meek and humble Jesus, were the Scribes and Pharisees, who reviled his person, censured his actions, condemned his doctrine, and persecuted him unto death, even the death of the cross. Does not the Apostle tell us, *that the crucifixion of Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews, and was treated by the Gentiles as a piece of folly?* Thanks, for ever, to the Father of mercies, this scandal is done away; the light of the gospel has dispersed the clouds of ignorance

norance and idolatry. The cross of Christ, instead of being the reproach of his followers, is now become their boast and their glory: It is the distinctive badge of Christian kings and princes, and waves in the banners of their armies. But, alas! another kind of scandal has succeeded in its stead; a scandal, odious to Christ, and destructive of Christianity. Christians are not now scandalized in Christ, but they are a scandal to Christ; they are a scandal to his holy Church; they are a scandal to her children. Far from edifying their brethren by their good example, and leading them into the paths of salvation, by their wholesome advice, they set before them the dangerous example of their own disorderly lives; they insil into their minds, their own corrupt maxims and principles; and contribute, as far as in them lies, to the ruin of those souls, which Jesus Christ has ransomed by his blood. Christians! Are not such men enemies of the cross of Christ? Can any guilt be greater than theirs? If then a spark of faith remain within you, you must detest from your hearts, the sin of scandal; and be determined to counteract its baneful influence, by leading such lives as may procure the glory of God, and the salvation of your neighbour.

To deter you, therefore, from giving scandal to your brethren; to inculcate the obligation you are under of giving them good example, is the main object of the following discourse. I shall therefore endeavour, with the Divine assistance, to prove to you, how displeasing to the Almighty, the sin of scandal is, subject of the first part; how ruinous in its consequences, subject of the second.

O sovereign Judge of the living and the dead! On that last and dreadful day, when the general assembly of the children of Adam shall be summoned before thee, thou shalt send thy angels to pluck up all scandals out of thy kingdom. They will then faithfully execute this commission as ministers

nisters of thy awful and adorable justice. But this life is a time of mercy; thy will is not that the sinner die, but that he be converted and live. Grant, O Lord, that we may answer thy gracious views, and banish scandals out of thy kingdom by our exemplary lives. May we sanctify ourselves, and contribute to the conversion and sanctification of our brethren. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, who was a perfect model of all virtues; whose life was uniformly holy and edifying, whom the Church justly styles the refuge and advocate of sinners. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Of all the subjects of Christian morality there is none more important than the present, and yet none so little attended to. There is no sin more universally spread than that of scandal. It is the fruitful source of the depravedness of morals, of the decay of piety, of the relaxation of discipline, in a word, of all the disorders of the Christian world. Many are guilty of it, who imagine that it does not at all concern them. They will allow, that they have committed many grievous sins, but they never seriously reflect on the scandal annexed to them: We are accountable, they say, for our own personal sins; but what have we to do with the sins of others? Now, Christians, to prevent any mistakes on this head, it may be necessary to give you a clear definition of the sin of scandal: by scandal, then, is understood, any word, action, or omission that is evil in itself, or has the appearance of evil, and is the occasion of another's falling into sin. How odious the sin of scandal is to the Almighty, appears from the many woes pronounced against it. *It must needs be, says the Saviour of the world, that scandals come; but nevertheless, woe to that man, by whom scandal cometh.* Yes, scandal is a necessary conse-

consequence of the wickedness and corruption of the world. Let us, as yet, attend to what he says in the same place: *If a man shall scandalize one of these little ones, that believe in me, it were better for him, that a mill-stone were about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* Consider, Christians, how the meek and humble Jesus thunders out his maledictions against the man of scandal. Can any words more strongly mark the wrath and indignation of Heaven? It were better, then, for a man never to have been born, than to draw his neighbour into sin, and cause the ruin of his soul.

This sin of scandal must be detestable in the sight of God, on account of its peculiar enormity; for it is a diabolical sin, a sin essentially opposite to the gracious views which our Saviour had, in coming into the world. The enemy of souls, according to the language of holy writ, was *a murderer from the beginning, a murderer of souls*; he continues to be so: he employs a thousand artifices to allure them to evil, to lead them into the ways of perdition, and to involve them in the same eternal misery, to which he is condemned. Now, as if hell with all its forces, was not strong enough to effect its horrid purposes, man engages in the service of Satan; he becomes his busy agent, his enterprising undertaker; he seduces numbers of souls by his evil example, by his poisoned discourses, by his subtle insinuations; and thus he contributes to advance the cause of his infernal master, to enlarge his conquests, and establish his empire. O! is not such a man a child of wrath, a child of the devil. He runs headlong to his own destruction. But he is not satisfied to go alone; he must have companions; he must open the gates of hell to thousands. Lest, however, you suspect that there is any thing exaggerated in this general description of the man of scandal, or lest what I have said may appear to you to be the fruit of an imagination heated by the subject, I shall endeavour to realize it, and bring it home to your conviction,

by a few familiar instances: Let me ask you, then, what is the employment of the sensual man, the libertine, the man of pleasure? Does he not spend his days in the works of darkness? Possessed by an impure spirit he goes about seeking whom he may devour. He triumphs over the weakness of one, he abuses the simplicity of another, he takes every advantage of the indiscretion of a third; he even offers wages of iniquity to those unfortunate creatures, to whom he thinks they will be acceptable, and, instead of being covered with shame and confusion, or stung with remorse, he values himself on his success, and glories in his conquests. It were scarce credible that any Christian could proceed to such an excess of wickedness, were there not living instances of it before our eyes. O God of purity and sanctity! what a monster, in thy sight, must this man of scandal be, whose study is to sacrifice as many victims as he can, to his brutal lust.

But what shall I say of those old sinners, who are veterans in the service of Satan, who, hackneyed in the ways of vice, become its teachers and apostles, who are like so many masters seated in the chair of pestilence, dealing about their destructive lessons to all who come within their reach. O my God! who can describe the enormity of their guilt. They pick up the youth of the neighbourhood they are in; they laugh at their artless simplicity; they make them lay aside that shame, which is the safeguard of virtue and innocence. Thus, having prepared the way for the accomplishment of their hellish designs, they insinuate into those tender minds, the poison of their own corrupt hearts; they teach them what they never ought to know; and, as in these matters, speculation and practice go hand in hand, they take care to lead them through every stage of vice, till they make them as vicious as themselves. Are there not many, so devoid of all principle, as to

persuade

persuade servants and apprentices to embezzle the substance of their masters, and children to steal from their parents: and for what purpose? That they may share in the spoils, and eat the bread of idleness and iniquity, though they have hands to earn an honest livelihood, if they were so disposed. Thus a villainous traffic is carried on, one sin is repaid by another, injustice by prostitution. O my God! to what a wretched situation has scandal brought the Christian world. You see, Christians, how I am reduced to the necessity of almost degrading the dignity of the pulpit, by entering into a detail of the abominable practices of the age we live in. The nature of the subject, and your own spiritual advantage require, that those workers of iniquity be exposed to public view. What a misfortune would it be, if scandal came from that very quarter, where nothing but good example ought to appear; if they, who are under particular obligations of edifying those who are under their care, become the instruments of their perversion, and the immediate occasion of their eternal ruin. But alas! this is too often the case. Do not disorderly masters often require of their servants what is directly contrary to the law of God? Do they not make them the accomplices of their iniquity, and keep them engaged in certain employments, too shameful to be mentioned here. *If any man, says St. Paul, has not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* Now, Christians, if this great apostle pronounced so dreadful a sentence against those masters, who are not sufficiently attentive to the salvation of their servants, in what terms would he describe the guilt of those masters, who, instead of guiding their servants to heaven, lead them directly to hell.

But what shall we say of those parents, who are so lost to all feeling, as to give up, even their own children, to the enemy of souls, instead of

giving them up to God, from whom they received them. They train them up in all the low arts of pilfering; as soon as they are able to lift their hands, they teach them to seize on their prey, and they will not be satisfied, if they do not bring home, at night, some fruits of iniquity. What can be expected from such children, but a life of consummate villainy; a life, that leads from an untimely death, to an unhappy eternity. We are shocked at the conduct of those Pagans, who, blinded by a barbarous superstition, sacrificed their children to idols; but here are Christians, who rob the living God of those children that were consecrated to him by their baptism, who murder their souls, and sacrifice them to the devil. Unhappy parents! was it for this you brought your children into the world, that you might make them for ever miserable? O who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, to bewail so shocking, so unnatural a scandal!

Hitherto, Christians, I have considered the worst species of scandal, that species of it which is called by Theologians, direct scandal. In order to incur this guilt, a man's formal intention and design must be, to draw others into sin. Now, whatever idea you may conceive of the enormity of this crime, I appeal to yourselves, if there be not instances enough to justify what I have said. But a man may very often give scandal without going so far: For you must know, that every visible, or outward sin, may be an occasion of scandal to the neighbour. Let these, then, look to themselves, who are addicted to the vile habits of drunkenness, swearing, and blasphemy; who deal in profane, irreligious discourses; in words of double meaning; I might add a thousand other particulars, in which many indulge themselves without scruple. Now, let me ask you, if such men, by their conduct, morals, and example, do not openly authorize the vices which they practice, and discountenance the contrary

trary virtues? Yes, they add to that mass of scandal, in which the world unfortunately abounds. Thus it happens, that vice, losing its native deformity, is favourably received by the bulk of mankind. In vain do you pretend to justify yourself, by saying, that you did not foresee such dreadful consequences: It was your business to foresee, and to guard against them.

There are other scandals which tend to dishonour the Church of Christ: For, they who are strangers to her holy maxims, often attribute to her, the disorderly practices of her children, as if she not only tolerated, but encouraged them; whereas, nothing can be more contrary to her spirit, than such abuse; because they are contrary to the spirit of God, by which she is ever guided. I shall produce one instance of scandal, which, to our disgrace, prevails in our own country. On the days particularly consecrated to the Divine worship, you may see the poor cheerfully quitting their homes, and travelling many a mile, to assist at the celebration of the holy and tremendous Mystery. While they remain in the house of God, nothing can be more edifying than their deportment; but no sooner do they quit the sacred place, than they seem to lose, not only all sense of religion, but even of common humanity; an old quarrel is revived; fierce and deadly blows are dealt on all sides; bloodshed ensues, and perhaps murder. Is this the conduct to be expected from those who profess the law of the meek and humble Jesus, who was led, like a lamb to the slaughter, not opening his mouth? Is this what they are taught by their holy religion, which obliges them to love their very enemies, and to lay down their lives for their neighbour, in case the honour and glory of God, and the salvation of his soul should require it?

From the present corrupt state of society, it is not to be wondered at, if the poor fall into many disorders,

disorders, when the rich, who ought to be so many shining lights, to point out to them the way to everlasting happiness, are only false lights, that lead them astray. Are there any, more ungrateful to the sovereign Benefactor, than they, whom he has crowned with temporal blessings? One would think, that he is concealed from their careless view, by the cloud of his own gifts. Instead of sharing the blessings they enjoy, with those from whom Providence has withheld them, they steel their hearts, and shut their hands against the necessities of their fellow-creatures. They study their own ease and convenience; they answer the unreasonable demands of luxury and extravagance, while they suffer the poor to languish unpitied, unrelieved. And this, O my God! is the conduct of those, whom thou hast set up to be the comforters of the afflicted, the fathers of the fatherless, and the protectors of the distressed members of Jesus Christ. It would be but reasonable, one might suppose, that they ought to shew their gratitude to God by an exact compliance with the solemn duties of religion. But, instead of this, they fall into a state of supine indolence and insensibility; they are totally indifferent with regard to them; they are ashamed to appear religious, as if it were a disgrace to their superior good sense, to let the world know, that they think seriously of the salvation of their souls.

It has been already hinted to you, that a relaxation of discipline, is one of those numberless evils which the sin of scandal introduces into the world: For example; one family in a parish thinks itself authorized to change a day of fasting into a day of feasting, and therefore, for their greater convenience, fasting must be laid aside; another family takes notice of this, and thinks itself equally entitled to the assumed privilege. And indeed, where there is neither right or title on either side, there is so far a species of equality; the disorder

der spreads from house to house, from family to family; at last it becomes general, and gains so much strength, that the strictest prohibitions are insufficient to check its baneful progress. Would any one imagine, that Christians, who stile themselves obedient children of the Church, would in so daring and barefaced a manner, transgress against her salutary ordinances, and trample her authority under foot? From what has been said, Christians, you may conclude, that scandal is highly displeasing to the Almighty. How ruinous it is in its consequences, is what remains for me to lay before you in

THE SECOND PART.

When our Saviour descended from the throne of his heavenly Father, into this region of sin and misery, he came to overthrow the empire of Satan, to reform and sanctify the world, to call to himself an acceptable people, who would adore their God in spirit and truth: this was the end of all his toils and labours, his sermons, his miracles, his bitter passion, his cruel and ignominious death; for this he commissioned his apostles to preach before kings and nations, and, to announce to them the truths of eternal life. To compass this end the Holy Ghost descended on them, poured into their minds a heavenly light, and visibly kindled in their hearts, the fire of the Divine love. To these gracious views of our Redeemer, scandal stands opposed; it raises the standard of rebellion, and wages open war against him; it robs him of those souls, for which he shed the last drop of his precious blood, and makes his death and passion fruitless and unavailing to them. Scandal, then, destroys the glorious work, which the apostles accomplished by so many labours. They changed the face of the world; on the ruins of general corruption and idolatry, they raised
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the edifice of Christian sanctity; they formed a Church on earth, which resembled the heavenly Jerusalem. But, alas! how soon was this fair prospect overcast by a melancholy gloom! What a frightful scene presents itself to view! Scandal comes, and substitutes tares in the place of the good grain, which Jesus Christ and his apostles had sown; like a plague, it communicates a deadly infection; like a fire, it consumes and devours whatever comes in its way. Christianity had introduced virtues unknown before to the world; scandal introduces among Christians, vices unknown to Pagans. Thus the reign of sin is kept up from age to age; the communion of sinners in this world, triumphs over the communion of the saints; vice is not only tolerated and excused, it is publicly authorized and applauded by the suffrage of the world. Wo then to these men of scandal, to those antichrists, who cause so many ravages in the Church of God, and leave her like Rachel, inconsolable for the loss of her children, who are torn from her bosom.

I believe, Christians, you are convinced of the ruinous consequences of scandal. It perverts the very ends for which society was instituted. As the Almighty wills the salvation of us all, his intention is, that we in particular, whom he has enlightened with the knowledge of his saving truths, should be a mutual help and support to each other, so as to promote the spiritual interests of our neighbour, especially, by our good and edifying examples. It is evident, that the man of scandal acts on a quite contrary plan; therefore, there cannot be a more dangerous enemy, a greater pest to Christian society. What a dreadful account, then, must the man of scandal render to the sovereign Judge for that train of evils, of which he is the unhappy author. For you know, that he is accountable for the sins of those whom he has seduced; some of them would have never walked

walked in the ways of vice, had it not been for him: they may therefore date their ruin from the time of their acquaintance with him. They fall into many grievous disorders; from one sin they plunge into another; till, at last, they fill up the measure of their iniquities, and are lost for ever. Oh, Christians, what an abyss of iniquity is here! What a complication of woes does the man of scandal draw down on his guilty head! What reparation can he make for the loss of souls? Had he robbed them of their property, deprived them of their reputation, or done them any other injury, it might be in his power to make some compensation or atonement. But, when he murders their souls, and ruins them for ever, where is the remedy? O my God! wilt thou not require the blood of his brother at his hands? Will it not cry to thee for vengeance, louder than the blood of Abel? Who then can describe the punishments which thou hast prepared in thy wrath for the man of scandal?

We are assured, by the authority of Holy writ, that those barbarous tyrants, who imbrued their hands in the blood of the martyrs of Jesus Christ, and attempted to destroy his holy Church in her infancy, will feel the full weight of the Divine vengeance; yet after all, their attempts were ineffectual, the number of executions added to the number of Christians. Under the severe discipline of persecution, were formed the most eminent saints, and the most heroic virtues sprung. Now, what all the power of the Cæsars, what so many laws written in blood, and dictated by hell, could not do, the man of scandal attempts and does. The Cæsars fought against the Church, and were defeated; the man of scandal fights and triumphs. His seduction then is more powerful than the authority of the Cæsars; he is a viper in the bosom of the Church, and is more to be dreaded than an open and avowed persecutor. He destroys, as far

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as in him lies, the spirit of the Church, the spirit of Christianity: how enormous then is his guilt? Does it not exceed that of the Cæsars, who were blinded by the spirit of darkness? What shall he say for himself when he shall be summoned to appear at the bar of the Divine Justice, when Jesus Christ will charge him with having made so many apostate Christians; with having extinguished in their hearts the fear and love of God, and plunged them into hell: with what anguish and confusion will he then be overwhelmed? What imprecations will be poured on his head by the companions of his endless misery, whom he has brought unto that place of torments? Will not this be an additional subject of despair and distraction to him for all eternity?

To sum up all that has been said by collecting the instructions which naturally arise, let us, in the first place, beware of the many scandals which over-run the world. If the dearest friend we have on earth, be to us an occasion of sin, let us break off with him at once; there is no safety for us but in flight. Whatever violence we may offer ourselves, it is much better to renounce his friendship, than expose our souls to eternal ruin. This is exactly following the advice of our blessed Saviour, who desires us not to spare the right-hand or the right-eye, if either of them should cause us to offend God. In the next place, it is our duty carefully to watch ourselves, lest we give scandal unto others: let nothing then appear in our conduct, manner, actions, or amusements, that may lead our neighbour into sin, or draw down on our heads the many woes pronounced against the man of scandal; the general law of charity obliging us to edify our brethren.

When we consider the great obligations we are under to our Redeemer; the first thought that arises in our minds is, that we ought to return him love for love. Now, how can we love him, if

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we love not those souls, for which he has shed his blood. If ever there was a time that required good example, it must be the present. One would imagine, that the man of sin, foretold by St. John, was already come out of the abyfs, to infect the earth with the poison of his iniquities. Let us endeavour to stem the torrent of scandal by our good example. But this we cannot do without the aid of the Divine grace. Let us, therefore, present our supplications to the Father of mercies, and beseech him, through the merits of our Redeemer, to grant us strength and resolution to fight his battles, and vindicate his glory from the insults which are daily offered it by the man of scandal.

Thou hast said, O Lord, that he who is not with thee, is against thee. May we be ever with thee; may nothing be ever able to separate us from thee; may the purity of our lives bear testimony to the purity of our faith; may our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify thee, who art in heaven; may we form a happy society of Christians, united to each other by virtue and charity. Thus, having triumphed over the world and its scandals, we may expect to receive, at thy hands, the glorious reward prepared for those who fight and conquer,

S E R M O N I I I .

ON SUFFERINGS.

Another for the Second Sunday of Advent.

And when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said unto him, Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another? Matt. xi. 2, 3.

JOHN in prison, and loaded with chains, is the subject which the Church on this day, proposes to our consideration. In laying before us so striking an example of suffering virtue, she means to reconcile us to the trials, which God, in his mercy, is pleased to send us. This great saint, whose birth and life were so extraordinary and miraculous, whom the Saviour, in his encomium on him, raised above the patriarchs and prophets, above all the virtuous men that ever existed, is thrown into prison, as if he had been a common malefactor, and a disgrace to mankind. The holy zeal with which he reprimands the incestuous Herod, is his only crime; fear cannot detach him from his duty; he tells the truth openly to a wicked prince, who, unacquainted with such language, condemns the

the man of God, to a loathsome dungeon. The worthy Precursor, knowing that his mortal life was almost at an end, is careful to provide for the salvation of his disciples: accordingly, he sends two of them to our blessed Saviour, in order that having profited of his heavenly conversation, and been witnesses of his miracles, they might be convinced that he was the Messiah, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. *John i. 29.* Of this truth the Baptist never formed the least doubt; of this he bore the most honourable testimony, even in his mother's womb: it was not, then, for his own information he sent them, it was out of a tender regard to their eternal welfare, and to the glory of his divine Master, which was the constant object of his thoughts, during his whole life, and continues to be the object of them to his last moments.

Christians, here is a lesson for us; let us endeavour to reap the fruit of it. When God is pleased to visit us with afflictions, are we steadfast and zealous in complying with our duty, in advancing the honour and glory of God's name, and in submitting our wills to his unchangeable decrees? Are we not rather apt to fret, to murmur against Providence, and even sometimes to sink into despair? We see others shine in the midst of wealth and affluence, we see them honoured and respected, and in full possession of all earthly advantages, while we, perhaps, are a prey to poverty, sickness, and those other evils, from which we all have a natural aversion: it must be confessed, that poverty, sickness, racking pains, and those other evils, which are interwoven with our present state, are severe trials. Humanity drops a tear over these scenes of complicated woe, severe to flesh and blood; certain allowances must therefore be made for those first feelings, to which the most perfect are liable: but then, faith ought to triumph over nature, and make her bow down to the holy appointments

pointments of him, who knows what is best to our purpose, much better than we do ourselves. If we reasoned right, and according to the maxims of our holy religion, we should not only submit with patience to the sufferings we meet with, but even receive them with joy, as the surest pledge of the Divine favour. In this vale of tears, no one can pretend to an entire exemption from suffering: whatever our situation may be, whether rich or poor, we have something or other to bear with from ourselves, from others, and from what we call unlucky accidents, which do not depend on ourselves, but are directed to our greater good, by the Sovereign Ruler of all events. It is plain, that some have more to suffer than others, but the general duty of all is to bear up in a proper manner, and with a Christian spirit, against the inconveniences, or supposed misfortunes that may come in their way. There is no such thing as gaining heaven on any other terms: it is then of the utmost importance to us all, to comply faithfully with so indispensable an obligation.

To engage you thereto, is the object of the following discourse: In the first part of which, I shall lay before you, the necessity and advantages of sufferings; and in the second, the Christian dispositions with which you ought to receive them.

O divine Saviour! thou, who though innocent and spotless, were pleased to suffer so much for our instruction, and for the expiation of our offences, teach us to suffer as Christians, as thy faithful disciples; thou art the way, the truth, and the life; we cannot go astray, while we follow thy steps; enable us to get the better of our weakness, and to go on, cheerfully, in the way thou markest out for us. For this purpose we humbly implore thy powerful assistance, through the intercession of thy blessed mother, who having been a mother of sorrows, must have the greatest compassion for the afflicted. Let us salute her in the words of the Angel, *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

When we consider in general what God has permitted, with regard to his chosen servants in this life, and the reasons which may be assigned for the seemingly hard treatment they meet with, we shall no longer doubt of the necessity and advantages of sufferings; whatever the Providence of God has marked out as the ordinary means of attaining to eternal happiness, must be useful and necessary. Among these ordinary means, are sufferings and afflictions, as may clearly be inferred from the history of the just; which, if traced down from the beginning of the world to the present moment, would exhibit them to view, engaged in crosses, contradictions, hardships, persecutions, and whatever is most disagreeable to flesh and blood. Among the many instances of this truth, with which the sacred writings furnish us, that of the holy Job is particularly striking. This great servant of God, in the beautiful language of Holy writ, was a comfort to the widow, a father to the poor, eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; and yet, what a train of calamities rushes on him? how rapidly do they succeed each other? It is not enough, that all wordly substance should vanish at once; his numerous offspring are buried under the ruins of his house, and he is covered from head to foot with an hideous leprosy, which makes him a shocking spectacle to his most intimate friends. We know with what astonishing patience this holy man submitted to these severe trials. How remarkable are his expressions on the occasion? *The Lord has given, the Lord hath taken away; let the name of the Lord be blessed.* Job i. 21.

If from the Old Testament we pass to the New, we shall find our divine Saviour, who is our head, our teacher, and our model, concluding a life of crosses and contradictions, by suffering a most shameful and

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and cruel death. His immediate followers drank deep of the bitter cup of affliction; what hardships have not the Apostles endured, when they went to spread the light of the gospel over the world; not to mention their other sufferings, which St. Paul sets forth at large. Have they not all sealed their faith with their blood, if we except St. John, who would have expired in the midst of torments prepared for him, had not his divine Master miraculously interposed? After the times of the apostles, do we not see persons of all ages, sexes, and conditions, present themselves to racks, gibbets, fire and sword, and all the dreadful instruments of persecutions, which the rage and malice of infidelity could invent? All these holy sufferers were certainly in the favour and friendship of the Almighty; and, as his particular Providence was constantly watching over them. We may be assured, that he permitted these things for their greater good: for if a constant enjoyment of earthly advantages were more conducive to this end, he would certainly shower them down on them; but knowing what was best to their purpose, he sent them crosses and afflictions. We should therefore receive these badges of Christ, as so many favours and blessings, as the particular portion and inheritance of the saints.

The language of the Scriptures is entirely conformable to the doctrine here delivered; St. Paul assures us, *all that will live godly in Jesus Christ, shall suffer persecution*, 2 Ep. Tim. iii. 12. *for whom the Lord loveth, he chastizeth; and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Heb. xii. 6. From these, and many other passages, it is evident, that afflictions are the surest pledges of God's love. Every person, therefore, who has his salvation at heart, should tremble, when Providence seems to let him roll on in an overflowing tide of prosperity; when his life, instead of being a life of suffering, is a life of pleasures and amusements. If we desire to know,

know, why afflictions are so strongly recommended; a few obvious reasons will satisfy us on this head. In the first place, adversity is our safeguard against all the evils, to which prosperity commonly exposes us. But, it will be said, are not the goods of this life, so many blessings conferred on us by the great giver of all good gifts? They are, undoubtedly: but does not our corruption very often make them the sources of many disorders? When a man sees every thing go on according to his wishes, his family flourishing in the midst of wealth and affluence, and himself receiving marks of respect and esteem, wherever he appears, is he not apt to be over-pleased with himself, to fasten his heart on a world, that uses him so well, and to forget his God, and the concerns of eternity? In this situation he might be lost, if the Almighty did not hasten to his relief: but God, who wills his salvation, sends him in his great mercy, a sudden stroke of adversity; as for instance, the loss of a friend or relation, or a disappointment in his temporal concerns: by this means he disturbs the false peace which the prosperous man enjoyed, makes him enter into himself, and rescues him from the danger, into which he was running headlong. Thus, the prodigal son began to open his eyes, when poverty and hunger made him feel his dreadful condition. Happy they, whom the Lord thus visits seasonably with the rod of affliction, and preserves them from the contagion of the world, in a state, where it makes the greatest havock. For, in general, what are the lives of those persons, who are most favoured with worldly felicity? Does not vanity, luxury, dissipation, pleasures not always the most innocent, totally engage their thoughts? At best, killing time as fast as they can, seems to be the principal object of their ambition; and is this the life of a Christian? Others of them, not satisfied till they shake off all restraint, openly set up the standard of impiety and

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irreligion, until at last, the hand of God falls heavy on them, and they die as they lived.

If prosperity naturally produces these disorders, adversity is a powerful remedy against them; it deprives us of several means of gratifying the passions; it checks self-love, it makes us feel in a sensible manner, our dependence on the great God who created us, and the vanity and inconstancy of the world, that has turned its back to us; in a word, it makes us enter into ourselves, and turn our thoughts from perishable objects, to those that are eternal. Whoever, besides, considers how weak man is, must allow, that he stands in need of repeated trials to know himself, and how little he is able to do. When our minds are in a perfect calm, when we are quite at ease, what fine resolutions do we commonly make: are we not apt to form a favourable opinion of our virtue, and to think, that if the most painful trials were sent us, they should find us fully prepared to receive them? But now, the wished for moment is come, God has given us an occasion to make our virtue appear; death takes hold of one of our dearest friends; another, in whom we placed our confidence, betrays us; temptations rush in on us; our mind is in a ferment; where is now all our boasted courage? We were heroes when the danger was at a distance, but on its nearer approach, we turn cowards, and basely fling away our arms. Does not then God deal most mercifully with us, in making us know what we are, in stripping the veil which pride and self-love had drawn before our eyes, and in preserving us from our spiritual blindness, that we may not sleep in death.

Whatever we may think of our virtue and innocence at certain periods, when we suffer reason to fall asleep, is there one among us, who, on a serious examination, will not find, that he stands charged before his Maker, with several transgressions. So great is the goodness and mercy of God, that,

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if we are patient and resigned, under the crosses and afflictions he sends us, he is pleased to accept of them as a satisfaction for our offences: at the same time, it is by the help of his grace that we are enabled to suffer, as we ought; and our sufferings acquire new degrees of value from the merits of Christ, which are plentifully bestowed on those who suffer with a Christian spirit, and with a view of satisfying the Divine Justice: in this case, the conduct of God may be compared to that of a creditor, who, having a right to demand from the debtor a payment in full, and to the last farthing, is willing to compound with him for a trifling sum, the means of advancing which, the creditor himself puts into his hands. We are all debtors to the Divine Justice; now is the time for discharging our debts at a cheap rate; reason and religion tells us, that we ought to lay hold on the present opportunity. What proportion is there between the sufferings of this life, and those of the next? The one is a time of mercy and indulgence, the other a time of justice and rigour. Shall we hesitate a moment on the choice we should make? Shall we not embrace the kind offer of our God, who makes us suffer here, that we may have nothing to suffer hereafter.

Another reason why sufferings are so useful and necessary, is, that though they be *light and momentary, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory*. Ep. 2 Cor. iv. 17. This is the language of the Apostle St. Paul, the catalogue of whose sufferings, appears so frightful to us. But this eminent Saint did not think, *that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us*. It is true, we have not a clear distinct idea of the happiness of this future state; but we know sufficient of it, to animate us to a constant unwearied pursuit of it: we know, that it is a state of pure and unmixed delights, that the glory thereof is beyond the reach

of our imaginations or conceptions: can we then take too much pains for so great a prize. How many spent their lives in toils and fatigues, in order to come at perishable riches, or the false and transitory honours of this world; and after all their services, may not a thousand accidents keep them at a distance from the wished for object? But supposing them in full possession of what they so earnestly sought for, what are these riches and honours, when considered in a proper light? How long shall they remain in their hands? How different is the situation of those, who contend for an incorruptible crown? What a pleasing prospect lies before them? Their reward is exceedingly great, it is everlasting, it is assured to them, if they manfully persevere unto the end, if they faithfully correspond to the divine grace, which will be their strength and comfort in the midst of their labours.

How false then, are the notions which the world entertains of sufferings? The reason, indeed, is obvious: the world only considers them as they appear to flesh and blood. But they who go farther, and judge of them by the light of faith, and that of reason, directed by this heavenly guide, discover without any difficulty, that these sufferings, however disagreeable to our pride, are the best discipline to form a soldier of Christ. Sufferings then, have been the particular portion of the saints in all ages; of our blessed Redeemer, and of his holy followers; they are the best and the easiest means to expiate our offences, to improve us in virtue, and to conduct us to the happy society of Christ and his elect. But how are we to receive these sufferings? What are the dispositions requisite, that we may reap from them the abovementioned advantages? This will be considered in the second part.

THE SECOND PART.

In order to know the dispositions, with which we ought to suffer, we need only examine the lives of Christ and his apostles, and take notice of the manner, in which they carried the heavy crosses that were laid on them. It is true, we cannot attain all that perfection, which these bright models have displayed in their sufferings: but we are bound to aspire to it, as far as human weakness will permit; we cannot say, that too much is required of us, especially, when we consider the nature of the trials, which commonly fall to our share. What are they, when put in competition with the severe conflicts of Christ and his apostles? Nothing: if our conduct under crosses, comparatively so light and easy, be quite contradictory to that, which our suffering Redeemer, and his suffering disciples have worked out, it must be then acknowledged, that these crosses, far from being conducive to our eternal happiness, will be registered in the great book of accounts as so many charges against us.

That we may avoid so great a misfortune, let us consider the lessons, which Christ gave us on that night of sorrow, when all the scenes of his bitter passion are present to his view. *Mat. xxviii. 38.* He retires into the garden of Gethsemane, accompanied by three of his disciples. *Mark xiv. 32.* He declares, that *his soul is sorrowful, even unto death.* *Luke xxii. 39.* He is seized with fear; he has a clear and lively apprehension of his approaching sufferings, and of the blindness and ingratitude of the many, who were not to profit of them; in a word, his human nature is violently assaulted, and pours out her feelings in streams of blood. O Lord of glory, is it possible, that you should be thus oppressed with grief! Yes, Christians, he is clothed with our human nature, which

is susceptible of every impression of pain, grief, of agony and fear. But he is true God, as well as true man, these impressions are under the control of his Divine power; accordingly, how soon does he therefore, correct the expressions which flesh and blood had extorted from him? Prostrate on the ground he prays again and again, and concludes, by perfectly resigning himself to the will of his heavenly Father: *but yet, not my will, but thine be done.* Luke xxii. 42. Here, Christians, our Saviour suffers for our instruction; he shews us what our weakness is subject to, when afflictions rush in on us; and, by the manner in which he suffers, he points out the most effectual remedies we can make use of. Let us not then be discouraged, when a severe and unexpected trial rouses our sensibility, and fills our hearts for a time, with grief and anguish. We must not, like the haughty Stoics, pretend to divest ourselves of human nature and to be insensible to every thing: no; God does not require impossibilities: nor would such a proud parade of self-sufficiency, ever agree with the humility of the gospel. But, whatever our afflictions may be, we are bound to suffer as Christians, and to seek comfort where it may be found, in the bosom of our holy religion; struck with a sense of our weakness, let us fly to the *Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*, Ep. 2 Cor. i. 3. who alone can compose the troubled soul to a perfect calm; fervour and perseverance will strongly recommend our prayers, and then we will find, that we, who can do nothing from ourselves, *can do all things in him that strengtheneth us.* Phil. iv. 13. Whatever struggles we may then find within ourselves, from the weakness and corruption of our nature, reason and religion will have the command of our souls; in our sufferings we will see the hand of God, who sends them to us for the best purposes; like dutiful children, we will conform our wills to that of our heavenly Father; we will

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say from the bottom of our hearts: *thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

Our Saviour carries this instruction farther, when he foretells what his disciples were to suffer from a persecuting world. He desires them in the midst of their sufferings *to rejoice, and be exceedingly glad.* Luke vi. 33. How exactly have they followed the advice of their divine Master? We read in their acts, that having been cast into prison, and miraculously delivered out of it, *Acts v. 17.* they were insulted by the Jewish council, for preaching up their crucified Lord in the midst of Jerusalem. Was it not natural, that they should resent this unjust and tyrannical treatment? But these worthy disciples of Christ cheerfully embrace it; *they depart from the council, full of joy, because they are thought worthy to suffer contumely for the name of Jesus.* St. Paul declares of himself in particular, *that he was exceedingly joyful in all tribulations. . . . that he took pleasure in receiving affronts.* 2 Cor. vii. 4.

This holy spirit of suffering with joy, was not confined to the apostles; it spread among the common faithful of the primitive times. St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, bears the most honourable testimony to the dispositions with which they suffered; that they received with joy, the loss of their earthly goods, because they were convinced, that better, and more lasting riches, were to be their reward.

We have examples enough to rouse us to the most perfect dispositions in our sufferings, and to encourage us to receive them, not only with patience, and an humble resignation to the will of God, but even with transports of joy. The martyrs wore the same flesh and blood that we do; they had the same, and perhaps stronger passions to encounter; some of them had the tenderness of age, or the delicacy of sex to plead in their favour: notwithstanding which, with what cheerfulness did they not embrace their torments? But, it will be said,

said, how is it possible that sufferings, which are the natural objects of our aversion, should afford matter of joy and comfort? It must be allowed, that this sounds like a paradox in the ears of those, who, far from controlling their inclinations, follow the bent of corrupt nature. But the true Christian, whose chief business in this life, is to prepare for the next, knows very well, that he is to judge of sufferings, not as they appear to sense, or to corrupt nature, but according to the maxims of the gospel, which tells him, that this bitter draught is a salutary one, that his heavenly Father gives it to him to drink, that Christ and his saints have drank it before him, and, that it is only by following their steps, that he can enter into heaven, and partake of their glory. How valuable would our sufferings be, if we took care to sanctify them by these dispositions? But how few ever think of doing so! You, then, who lead here below, a life of labour and hardship; you, who are under the daily necessity of suffering, how solicitous ought you be, to sanctify that state? You do not enjoy the happiness which this world affords: endeavour then, to give your sufferings their full value and dignity, and to secure to yourselves everlasting happiness in the world to come: how is this to be done? By remaining content and satisfied with the state you are in; by viewing it in its proper light, and acknowledging the mercy of God, which has rescued you from the many and commonly fatal dangers of prosperity; in fine, by arming yourselves with the dispositions already mentioned. This is the way to ease and lighten your sufferings in this life, and to make them produce eternal joys in the next. You act, as if you had a right to call God's Providence to an account, for the hard treatment you think you meet with. You vent your impatience in murmurs and complaints, in cursing, swearing, blaspheming, in malicious discourses, empoisoned with envy and detraction,

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in a word, you abandon yourselves up to mean and destructive vices, which only serve to redouble your pain, and give a new edge to your sufferings. If you continue to go on at this rate, is it not to be dreaded that you will be doubly losers? You are in a state of misery here, and you expose yourselves to everlasting misery hereafter. It would be a deplorable thing, if you lost your souls, though you were to gain the whole world by it: but to lose your souls and to have nothing in exchange, but all the wretchedness that this world can afford, this is the height of madness. And you, Christians, whose easy circumstances would lull you asleep, if God did not, at times, give you some warning strokes to rouse you to a sense of duty, and to make you feel his absolute dominion over you, receive with gratitude these pledges of his mercy, and remember, that he never deals more favourably with you, than when he makes you smart under the rod of his fatherly correction. And is it not better to feel a little in this life and to be eternally happy in the next, than from a life of ease and pleasure, to pass to an eternity of pain and sorrow, and to be treated like those victims, that were formerly pampered with care, and decked with flowers, but were soon to feel the deadly blow, and to pour out their blood in sacrifice? Barren wishes will never effect this: it is *through many tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts xiv. 21. these tribulations will visit us, when we least expect them; it will, to a certainty, cost us a deal to be always on our guard, and ready to receive them.

O Sovereign Ruler and Maker of all things, you know the weakness of your creatures, you know the conflicts we have to undergo in this vale of tears; without your assistance we can do nothing available to eternal life, send us then, O Lord, your victorious grace; this will break down all the opposition

position which corrupt nature raises against suffering. You are not wanting to those who earnestly implore your protection. In the midst of trials and dangers, hardships and tribulations, let an humble confidence in you be our defence and security. Let us cry to our Lord in the words of St. Peter, *Lord, save us, else we perish*: Matt. viii. 25. Enable us, O Lord, to give you a proof of our fidelity, pour into our souls more plentiful supplies of grace, and work them into an habitual disposition of suffering in a Christian manner. And after conducting us safe through the snares and temptations of this life, receive us into that glorious kingdom, which you have purchased and opened for us by your sufferings and blood. Amen, Jesus!

S E R M O N I V .

ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

For the Third Sunday of Advent.

*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness : make
straight the way of the Lord. John i. 23.*

THIS is the account the Baptist gives of his ministry, which was calculated to prepare man for the coming of the Redeemer. This is the constant subject of his discourses ; for this purpose he frequently exhorts the Jews to do penance, to bring forth fruits worthy of penance, that they may be entitled to the benefits held out to them by this glorious event. The preparation for the coming of Christ being always the same, they who are resolved to celebrate the approaching festival in a proper manner, must endeavour to be reconciled to the Almighty, and to invite the infant Jesus into their souls.

We cannot sufficiently praise and admire the goodness of God, who has furnished us with most powerful means of salvation ; means directly instituted for the remission of our sins. He left to his Church the Sacrament of Baptism, the sacred laver of regeneration, to wash away the stain of original guilt,

guilt, and in his mercy, was pleased to establish an awful tribunal, to which sinners may have recourse whenever they are so unhappy as to violate their baptismal covenant. You know that I allude to the Sacrament of Penance; a sacrament which has done wonders in former ages, and exhibited to the world models of perfect conversions: Can it be supposed, that it has lost any share of its virtue and efficacy by coming down to us through so long a succession of ages? No; the virtue and efficacy thereof proceed from the merits of Christ, which are equally powerful in all ages. If then it does not produce the same fruits now, that it has formerly done, it must be entirely our own fault: How many keep at a distance from it for a series of years, though they cannot but know, that complying with the precept of the Church in this point, is a matter of strict obligation? How many on the other hand frequent it, but unfortunately, for want of the proper dispositions, they meet with poison instead of a remedy, and death instead of life?

It is necessary to guard you against these two evils, of which one consists in neglecting to frequent the sacrament of penance, and the other in not frequenting it as we ought. For this purpose, the sacrament of penance, and the disposition requisite to obtain the benefit of it, shall be the subject of the following discourse. In the first part, I shall explain to you the necessity and advantages of the sacrament of penance, and in the second, the dispositions with which we ought to approach it. O Divine Redeemer! whose sacred wounds are so many fountains of grace to the Christian world, grant that we may never prove so ungrateful as to reject the offers of your mercy. You are constantly inviting us in these endearing terms: *Come to me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* Mat. xi. 28. May we answer this loving invitation. May the approaching mysteries re-kindle in
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our hearts the spirit of devotion, and excite in them a sincere desire of clearing away our offences: But above all, grant us that contrite and humble heart, which you will not despise. For which purpose we humbly implore your assistance, through the intercession of your blessed mother, while with the Angel Gabriel we salute her. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

When man became subject to sin and corruption, when following this unhappy tendency, he fell into actual guilt, and thereby incurred the displeasure of his Maker; nothing was so necessary for him, as to appease the divine wrath, provoked against him. Reason itself tells us, that, in order to effect this desirable purpose, he ought to conceive an hearty sorrow for the offence committed, to enter into a firm resolution never to offend his God, and to make a proper atonement and reparation for the injury done unto him by sin. All this is comprized in what theologians call the virtue of penance, and of this virtue the Church assembled in her last general Council declares, that it was ever and always necessary. Accordingly, in every part of the Old Testament, the Jews are exhorted to quit their evil ways, to turn to the Lord with all their hearts, to rend their hearts and not their garments: such, in the old law, were the means requisite to obtain the remission of sins, and on this foundation the Saviour of the world was pleased to erect the tribunal of Penance. Here, Christians, I shall confine myself to such observations, as the nature of the subject absolutely requires; observations founded on one of the clearest passages in Holy writ.

Our Saviour shortly before his ascension, gave his peace to his Apostles, saying, *Peace be to you; as the Father sent me, I also send you*: When he said this, he breathed upon them, and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them,*

them, John xx. 21, 22, 23. and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained. We know how Christ was sent by his Heavenly Father; was it not with a full power over every thing, both in heaven and on earth, with a power of remitting sins? Did he not exercise this power? And now he communicates it to his Apostles and to their successors to the end of time. Here, the mercy of God, shines forth in a most conspicuous manner. What! shall a poor worm of earth be invested with so glorious a commission? Yes, when God declares, that this is his will, and declares it in the most solemn manner. This is a privilege not limited to any particular time; it is necessary at all times; and the Providence of God, that constantly watches over his Church, will never leave her destitute of the means of reconciliation.

As this power is granted for the general good of mankind, the minister invested with it is bound to exercise it according to the rules of Christian prudence and discretion, when he finds that the person who applies to him, has made serious efforts against his evil habits; that he has avoided every occasion of sin, and that he retains no affection to it. These are matters which cannot possibly be known without a particular confession; which being made, then may he with safety pronounce a favourable sentence. But if it plainly appears, that the sinner has taken no pains against his inveterate disorders, and that he retains an attachment to any one favourite vice, then is the absolution to be withheld, since the pronouncing of it in such circumstances could not be of the least service to the sinner.

As these two sentences, the one of remitting, and the other of retaining sins, are entirely different from each other, you plainly perceive, that the spiritual judge, before pronouncing either, should have the several cases stated before him, in order that he may in a rational manner, and with full cognizance

zance of the cause, either proceed to the absolution, or defer it to a more reasonable time: Moreover, as in the ordinary course of God's Providence, the sacrament of penance only remits sin; as to the guilt thereof, and the eternal punishment due thereto, which eternal punishment is changed into a temporal one, the confessor is bound to give the penitent an opportunity of clearing away, at least a part of this temporal punishment, by enjoining on him satisfactory works, which may bear a certain proportion to his offences. And how shall he observe this proportion, without entering into a particular detail, which may lead him to an exact knowledge of the penitent's condition? This is the nature of the sacrament of penance; we find it resorted to as such by the faithful from the commencement of Christianity; not a single age that does not furnish us with proofs of its having been considered as a means necessary for salvation. What shall we conclude from the concurring testimonies of so many ages? We know, that to discover to a sinner like ourselves our most secret and shameful sins, is mortifying to human pride; it appears shocking to flesh and blood: it is clear then, that mankind would have never submitted to such a law, had they not been thoroughly convinced, that it came to them stamped with the seal of divine institution. You see, then, that the authority of Holy writ, and the constant practice of the faithful, clearly demonstrate the necessity of confession: but the Church, finding that some of her perverse children were indifferent with regard to the observance of this duty, made a positive ordinance; in consequence of which all those who have attained the age of discretion, are bound to confess at least once a year, and that under pain of excommunication, and other penalties to be inflicted by the ecclesiastical superior; at the same time, it is her earnest desire, that we should frequently approach the tribunal of reconciliation. We are then under an indispensable obligation

gation of frequenting the sacrament of penance, and it is our own interest to do so; innumerable are the advantages arising from a regular and frequent performance of this duty.

I shall reduce them to three principal ones, and endeavour to shew you the virtue and efficacy of this sacrament in cancelling our past sins, in satisfying the Divine Justice, and in strengthening us against future relapses. First, with regard to cancelling our past sins: Is there one among us that can say, he has preserved his baptismal innocence unfulled? On the contrary, are we not in general adding sin to sin each day of our lives? And these sins must necessarily be atoned for either here or hereafter. How wonderful then is the goodness of God, who, though he might have cast us off, when once we proved unfaithful to our baptismal engagements, has provided us with the most effectual means of expiating our infidelities, and recovering his friendship? He knew our weakness, he knew the temptations that were to assault us, and accordingly he has left us what the Holy Fathers call the second plank after shipwreck: It is a divine remedy, which has in view the remission of sins committed after baptism; the merits of Christ powerfully operate towards its success, and nothing is wanting but that the sinner should make a proper use of it. With regard to bodily disorders, we may observe, that what is apt to give relief in one, proves hurtful in another; and as for an infallible cure for every disorder, it may be spoken of indeed, but it remains as yet to be discovered. Here, however, is a remedy for all our spiritual disorders: Are we hurried away by a spirit of pride and revenge? Are we distracted with the schemes of worldly ambition? Are we slaves to lust? Let us open the wounds of our souls to our spiritual physician, and we will find relief. An eminent writer, enumerating the advantages of confession, introduces Christ addressing himself to the sinner in these expressions: "If you

you discover your sins, I will hide them ; if you acknowledge them, I will pardon them ; if you accuse yourself, I will not accuse you ; if you judge and condemn yourself, I will neither judge nor condemn you." We are all sinners, shall we not then have recourse to this divine, this universal remedy, which clears away past offences, and satisfies the divine Justice ?

It was already mentioned, that the guilt of sin, and the eternal punishment due thereto, being cancelled by the sacrament of penance, there generally remains a temporal punishment to be paid by the sinner. That these temporal punishments are required by the justice of God, after the sin itself is remitted as to its guilt, appears from the example of the penitent David. The prophet Nathan had assured him, that his sins were forgiven him, and yet he threatens him on the part of God, with the death of that child whom he had by Bethshabee, and with other temporal calamities, which were accordingly inflicted on him. It is unnecessary to produce the many other proofs of this doctrine, which the sacred writings furnish us with : We are certain, that this was the constant faith of the Church. Was it not the principal object of her penitential canons to make sinners feel the severity of God's justice in the temporal punishments reserved for them ? Was it not on this account she formerly enjoined on them severe penances in sackcloth and ashes ; penances that lasted for ten or twenty years, and sometimes to the end of their lives ; and all this was to be submitted to for sins that are common at the present day. Our weakness and corruption have induced the Church to moderate the severity of her ancient discipline, and the atonements now enjoined are entirely different from such as were known in the primitive times. However, when, even, these light penances are performed in a proper manner, and in a conviction,

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that our sins deserve considerably more, in this case, though they be light in themselves, they derive a peculiar virtue from the sacrament, of which they form a part. Besides, the humility of confession contributes much towards satisfying the divine Justice, if we, by a Christian economy, take care to turn it to a proper account. We have a natural aversion to the performance of this duty; it costs us a deal to discover to a fellow creature the most hidden secrets of our heart, and cannot we make a sacrifice of our will on this occasion, with a view of atoning for our offences? Great God! you know the weakness of our frame, you see the struggles we have with corrupt nature, and if we make the spirit of pride and opposition, which is within us, yield to your will, and to the commands of your Church, you certainly will give us the reward of our obedience. But besides, exclusive of the satisfactions enjoined by the spiritual judge, the true penitent will always add something of his own, and leave nothing undone to appease the wrath of heaven in every respect. Christians, we are all certain, that we have offended God in many things; but we do not know, if we have discharged the great debt contracted by our sins. Our lives then ought to be a perpetual practice of penance, and we ought to frequent the tribunal of mercy, because it is there our penitential exercises are most effectual, and there we find a powerful support against future attacks.

It is undoubtedly a great advantage to obtain the remission of our past sins; it is a favour that deserves our warmest acknowledgments; yet after all were the operations of the sacrament of penance to rest here, if it had no influence on our future conduct, we should have less occasion to rejoice at the happy effects thereof; the patient would not think much of recovering from his illness, if he were to relapse immediately into the same, or perhaps

more grievous disorder. But, thanks be to God, such is the virtue of this sovereign balsam of our souls, that it supports the spiritual constitution against the dangers that threaten it: Yes, whoever approaches the sacrament with due dispositions, receives the graces annexed thereto, in consequence of which he is enabled to run on cheerfully in the ways of the Lord. Besides, the penitential works enjoined on him are not only satisfactory to the divine Justice, they are also calculated to preserve him from relapses: He is commanded to practice the virtues contrary to the vices he was subject to; to avoid the occasions of sin; to be reconciled to the neighbour with whom he was in a state of enmity; to make amends for the injuries he might have done him in his goods or reputation. Are not these so many preservatives? Do they not make him feel the smart of sin, and deter him from a repetition of it? Do they not weaken the force of his evil habits? Do they not impose on him a happy necessity of declining from evil, and doing good? Even in these degenerate days we see some examples of edifying conversions; and what are they owing to, but to the sacrament of penance? Happy penitents, who after having discharged the poison of sin from your hearts, experience that peace of mind which the world cannot give; that holy joy, which is a foretaste of heavenly bliss. Let us then pour out our souls in acts of thanksgiving to our Redeemer, who has left us this powerful sacrament, which cancels past sins, satisfies the divine Justice, and strengthens us against future attacks. Let us implore his forgiveness for our having repaid so great a favour by neglect and ingratitude. Let us be resolved never more to keep at a distance from this fountain of living waters, but to come without delay, and quench therein the thirst of our souls. But these means of salvation will never be effectual with regard to

us, without a certain preparation on our part, without certain dispositions, which are absolutely necessary. To explain this preparation, and these dispositions, will be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

A sinner who is fully sensible of his guilt, of the injury he has offered his heavenly Father, and of the unhappy state to which he is reduced, ought first of all to implore the Divine assistance, that he may discover his manifold offences, be heartily sorry for them, and make a sincere, humble and entire confession of them to an approved of Priest. How necessary this precaution is, must appear evident to any person, who has any knowledge of the human heart. We are apt to overlook our faults, and either, not to see them at all, or else to see them in the most favourable point of view. To bring ourselves to an account for what we have done amiss, is naturally disagreeable to us; and this is the reason, why the generality of mankind are perfect strangers to themselves. Pride and self-love are interwoven with our very being, and the mists which they raise before our eyes, must be dissipated by the light of grace. We must then beseech the Searcher of hearts to come to our aid, before we proceed to an examination of our conscience. This examination ought to be a careful and a diligent one: we must not content ourselves with what strikes us at first sight, we must go farther: we must pry into the very source of our actions, the motives that induced us, and the end we proposed to ourselves. We must also take notice of the circumstances that accompanied our actions; for these circumstances often make the actions much more sinful, and even sometimes change the nature of the sin entirely. The general subject of this examination takes in the commandments

mandments of God and of the Church, the general duties of Christianity, the particular duties of our calling, and the duties arising from the several relations we bear unto each other. Far be it from any one to say, that this is putting our minds to the torture; no, it is only required, that we take the same pains in these matters, that we do with regard to our weighty temporal concerns. Besides, it is in our power to make the matter much easier than is generally understood. May we not enter into ourselves every day of our lives? May we not in the silence of the night, when every thing invites to recollection, call to mind in the bitterness of our souls the faults we might have committed in the course of the employments and transactions of the day, beg forgiveness thereof, and so dispose ourselves for sleep, which is the natural image of death, not knowing but that we might awake in the other world? If we were exact in daily examining ourselves, and in frequenting the tribunal of mercy, we would acquire a sufficient knowledge of our hearts; and then the examination of conscience previous to confession would cost us very little. This is far from being the case of a sinner, who begins at last to think of his salvation, after having neglected it for a series of years. He is terrified, when he looks back at the manifold sins of his life; he knows not how to make his way through so tedious and frightful a reckoning, and he finds it extremely difficult to recollect even a few of his most grievous offences. But, where does the fault lie? Is it not at his own door? However, the difficulty he experiences ought not to discourage him: whatever his iniquities may be, the mercy of God is far beyond them all, and his grace will not be wanting to those who are not wanting to themselves.

You see that this examination of conscience is only difficult to those, who by the multiplied sins
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of their lives, and by their criminal neglect to make it, render it difficult to themselves, and that persons, who regularly comply with the duties of their religion, find no great hardship in practicing it. But it is not enough that we examine our conscience in a proper manner; we must also be heartily sorry for our offences. This is the life and soul of penance; and it is so very essential, that without it we cannot expect to be reconciled to the Almighty. A sinner by falling into mortal sin alienates his heart from God, who has an indefeasible right to it, and thereby inverts the order which his Sovereign Lord and Master had established, therefore, if he means to re-establish this order, he must restore his heart unto his Maker, whose undoubted property it is. But how can the sinner do this without being heartily sorry for his injustice and ingratitude, in preferring a base and criminal pleasure to the service of his great Benefactor? Again, it is from the heart that iniquity proceeds; if we mean then to be cleansed from iniquity, our hearts must renounce it, and all affections to it: And yet how many, after having examined their conscience, and that perhaps very superficially, approach the awful tribunal, as if they had nothing more to do, than merely to declare their sins. Others are satisfied, if they read an act of contrition in their prayer-books, or if they repeat one which they have committed to memory, if they strike their breasts, and give other exterior marks of grief; but you know, that all this may be done without the least change of heart. Let us therefore guard against these evils, and when we desire to be reconciled to God, let us not content ourselves with an outward performance, which will never satisfy him without the interior dispositions of the heart.

We must also take care, that our sorrow for sin and firm purpose of amendment be extended to all
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the mortal sins we recollect, and have confessed, after a diligent and strict examination of conscience. Our attacks must be particularly levelled against our predominant passions and inveterate habits; and even one favourite vice is not to be spared; all God's enemies are to be destroyed; for, *he that offends in one point of the law, is guilty of the whole*; he who violates one commandment, as certainly forfeits his title to the kingdom of Heaven, as if he had transgressed against them all; for making a reserve of some favourite passion would be imitating the unhappy Saul, who being ordered by God utterly to destroy the Amalekites spared Agag their king: but in consequence of this disobedience he forfeited the favour of the Lord, and both he and his posterity were excluded from the throne of Israel. It is not enough to do things by halves; we must make our sacrifice perfect, by sincerely renouncing all sin whatsoever, and every attachment to it. As this contrition must come from above, let us beg it of him, who is the giver of all heavenly gifts, and who will refuse nothing to a fervent and humble prayer. Let us detest sin, because we have thereby offended so good and so merciful a God, but not on account of any temporal inconvenience we might have suffered. Let us excite ourselves to this hearty sorrow, by considering the many favours which God has conferred on us, and the grievousness of our manifold offences. And as we have often experienced our weakness, let us beseech the Almighty to finish the work he has begun, and to grant, that our resolutions at last may get the better of the temptations, to which we have so often yielded, and work a thorough change in our lives.

It is now time to conduct you to the tribunal of penance, and to shew you how the penitent ought to proceed in a matter of such importance. The dispositions that ought to accompany his confession, I shall

I shall reduce to the three following: sincerity, humility, and a spirit of obedience.

First, His confession ought to be sincere. You know, that confession is an accusation of one's self with a view of obtaining forgiveness; an accusation by which we are to make ourselves as well known to our confessor, as we are known to ourselves. Would to God that our confessions were of this description. It is to be hoped, that there are not many, who do approach the sacrament of penance with a formal design of profaning it, and of abusing one of the most solemn duties of their religion to their eternal reprobation. However, may we not suppose, that people fall into dangerous mistakes in this point. We are inclined to favour ourselves at the expence of others, and this disposition often follows us to the sacred tribunal: for example, if a person accuses himself of having fallen into a passion, which led him into cursing, swearing, and perhaps acts of violence; he will add, that he was provoked to it, he could not avoid it, if a saint were in the same situation, he would have done as much. This is excusing, and not accusing ourselves; it is imitating our first parents, who being brought to an account for what they had done, began to charge each other therewith, instead of acknowledging their guilt. Again, it is only by dint of repeated questions, that a sinful habit is commonly discovered. If the first declaration were to be depended on, the sin would appear to be no more than a sin of surprise, whereas we might have continued in the practice of it for whole years together. Christians, an habit of this kind makes a great difference in the condition of the penitent; for this reason you must be attentive to know the number of times you have been guilty of such and such sins; if you cannot tell it exactly, you may come near it, at least you may give

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give such information to the confessor, as may enable him to form a proper judgment.

Secondly, Confession ought to be accompanied with humility. Here we prostrate ourselves, like criminals, soliciting the divine mercy, acknowledging our unworthiness, and carrying about us all the exterior marks of humility. Is not this enough to let us know what our interior dispositions ought to be? We are to return to our heavenly Father with the humility of the prodigal son, who, far from making an apology for his disorders, proclaims them aloud, and declares, that he no longer deserves to be called his son. Nothing can be more contrary to this disposition, than a spirit of pride and self-love, which tempts us to make a display of what is honourable to us, at a time when we ought to mention our crimes alone, to gloss over, in the softest expressions, what is most disgraceful to us, and not to dwell on it a moment, in hopes that it may escape the attention of the confessor. Great God! how many contrivances to impose on ourselves! But you cannot be imposed upon, for you read the secrets of hearts. Christians, as we must be at the trouble of confessing our sins, if we mean to save our souls, let us do the business as it ought to be done, let us expose our spiritual disorders with sincerity, with humility, and with a spirit of obedience.

What is meant here by a spirit of obedience, is, a ready and cheerful submission to what is enjoined by the spiritual judge. You ought to know the nature of these injunctions: they are calculated to satisfy the divine Justice, and to preserve the sinner from relapses. We ought then to perform this part of our duty, not in a careless negligent manner, but with a spirit of devotion and penance. What a blessing is it, that, instead of being cut off in the midst of our sins, as we richly deserved, we have it in our power to apply the merits of Christ,

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so many different ways, towards obtaining a full reconciliation with our heavenly Father. A true penitent who considers what it is to offend so good a God, will think he can never do enough to expiate his guilt. When we take a view of what the saints have done, of their works of mortification and self-denial, of the rigorous penances they imposed on themselves for slight offences, whereof we would not take the least notice, how ought we to be confounded at the striking contrast betwixt their innocent mortified lives and our sinful unmortified ones?

Christians, I have laid before you the dispositions requisite for a good confession: and from what has been said, you may know if your confessions have been such as they ought to be.

But there is an easier and a surer method of knowing this, a method pointed out by Christ himself: He declares, that the tree is known by its fruit: If then you have made a good confession, your lives will shew it. You have often presented yourselves at the tribunal of reconciliation; you have been admitted to that delicious banquet, which our loving Saviour has prepared for you; and after all these advantages, are your lives more regular and more edifying than before? Are you as careful to shun the occasions of sin, as mariners are to avoid the shoals and sands on which they have suffered shipwreck? Are you in peace and charity with the neighbour whose declared enemy you were? Have you restored to him his property, his wages, his hire unjustly kept from him? Have you repressed and subdued your inordinate passions? In a word, have you produced fruits of penance? If this be the case, you have reason to hope, that your worthy confessions and communions have been acceptable in the sight of God. But if nothing of this appears, if your passions have gained ground upon you, if you harbour still a spirit of malice
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and revenge, if, instead of making restitution to the neighbour, you content yourselves with a few prayers, which are no satisfaction at all to him, then, alas, you have too much reason to suspect the validity of your confessions. Christians, let us begin now at least to be in earnest; it is not too late; the merciful hand of God is always stretched forth to receive us. Let us implore the assistance of his all-powerful grace, and this will get the better of all our difficulties.

O divine Redeemer, you stooped so low as to become man for our sake, and be born of an humble virgin; and shall we, dust and ashes, refuse to submit to the humiliations of penance? No; we will offer up to you the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart; we will endeavour to cleanse and purify our souls, in order that you may be spiritually born there; we will sigh for your coming in the language of your Patriarchs and Prophets: "Ye Heavens let fall in gentle dews, ye clouds rain down the just. Open up thou earth, and send forth thy Saviour." May we be entitled to a share of that joy, which the Christian world will feel on this glorious occasion. May we, by duly celebrating your festivals here below, be disposed for celebrating an eternal feast in heaven in the company of thy saints.

S E R M O N V.

ON THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised ; his name was called Jesus. Luke ii. 21.

AFTER eight days were accomplished, his name was called Jesus ; a name above all names, at the sound of which every knee should bend, of those that are in heaven, on earth, or under the earth ; a name which triumphs over the powers of darkness, and forces the infernal spirits to retire into the shades of eternal night ; a name which commands all nature, and fills the world with wonders ; a name which supported the strength of so many martyrs, and made them expire with joy in the midst of torments ; a name incomparable, for it is the only one under heaven given to men whereby they must be saved, and which none, but God could properly bear.

This, Christians, is the glorious name which the heavenly Father gives to his beloved Son ; but Christians, if we consider this sacred name as to its effects and consequences, we shall find that it ought to be a name of majesty and independence,

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as also a name of humiliation and dependence: Yes, it carries with it, the most weighty obligations. Is it not to discharge these obligations that the Eternal Word submits to the painful and troublesome ceremony of circumcision, and wears the badge of sin? Is he then come into the world for no other purpose, but to suffer? Must he taste the bitter cup in the first dawn of life? It is not enough for him to have been born poor, weeping, and shivering with cold; he must write the name of Jesus in characters of blood! Yes, the justice of his heavenly Father requires it, and Jesus is all submission. He now officiates as a Saviour; he begins the work of our redemption. The circumcising knife is only a prelude to the scourge, to the nails, to the cross, to all the torments he there endured. You see how well he merits the adorable name which is given him. How wonderful is the condescension of the Man God! How boundless his charity! He stoops to our nature in order to raise it, to our weakness in order to strengthen it; he puts on the appearance of a sinner to heal the wounds of our souls. From what has been said, Christians, you will conclude, that the name of Jesus, and his circumcision, are two things intimately connected with each other. He submits to the penalty of sin, because he is a Saviour, and he merits the title of Saviour, by submitting to the penalty of sin. Again, he is not only our Saviour, he is also our teacher and legislator; while, therefore, he undergoes the exterior circumcision prescribed in the old law, he establishes an interior and spiritual circumcision, to be observed in the new. Thus, Christians, is the subject which I mean to lay before you, with the divine assistance, in the following discourse. In the first part, I shall endeavour to shew you, that in quality of Saviour, the divine Infant was obliged to fulfil in his own person, the law of circumcision, which was
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given to the Jews. In quality of our teacher and legislator, he obliges us to a more perfect circumcision, a circumcision of heart: the subject of the second part.

O Jesus! who offereft on this day, to thy heavenly Father, the first fruits of thy precious blood, afterward to pour out the last drop of it on the cross, grant that this blood be not shed in vain for us. May thy people, whom thou hast purchased at so great a price, never forget what thou hast suffered for them. O Lamb of God! who takeft away the sins of the world, take away from us whatever is displeasing in thy sight. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of thy blessed mother, who had so great a share in all thy sufferings. Oh! what tongue can express what she feels, when she beholds her bleeding Son! We salute her in the words of the Angel, saying, *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Circumcision was a sacrament of the old law, instituted by Almighty God to distinguish his chosen people from all the nations of the earth. It was the seal of the covenant made between him and the faithful Abraham, in consequence of which he was to bless Abraham and his posterity; and they on their part, were to be his people by a strict observance of his holy laws. It was, therefore, a ceremony of initiation in the service of God. St. Augustine, and other Fathers of the Church, as also many eminent divines among the moderns, are of opinion, that circumcision was the expedient for cancelling original sin in the small descendants of Abraham; that it was to them what baptism is to Christians. Now, it is evident, that there were many reasons, why the divine Infant should be exempt from this penal rite, this mark
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of servitude and of sin. Is he not innocence and sanctity itself; the perfect substantial image of his Father, in whom all his infinite perfections are fully expressed; the figure of his substance, the splendor of the eternal Light, the increated Wisdom, his eternal self-existing Word? His divinity, his ineffable generation in the bosom of his Father; his more than miraculous birth in the womb of a virgin by the operation of the Holy Ghost, are so many titles which plead an exemption from a law, not made for him but for us sinners. In order to answer this question, we may observe that he came not to annul the law, but to fulfil it; not to be free from the obligations of it, but to comply with every thing it prescribed; his whole life was to be one continued act of obedience to his heavenly Father. But the principal reason why he goes under the yoke of circumcision, and submits to a law which is both painful and disgraceful to him is, that he has taken the name of Saviour, and in him this name is not a shadow, but a reality; he is determined to support the glorious character in its full extent. Accordingly you shall see him one day nailed to the cross, covered over with wounds, and insulted by a furious rabble. You shall see him die the death of the innocent slave; and if you ask what was his crime, look up and read the inscription on the cross, it will tell you, "He is a Jesus; he is a Saviour:" this is his only crime.

It is true, he is a God; but he means to repair the disorders of the world. He is perfectly holy and incapable of sin, but he bends under the weight of the iniquities of the world; he is the only begotten son and heir of all things; but he is answerable for the crimes and prevarications of the rebellious slave. From this moment then, all his other titles and privileges yield to the title of Saviour; in quality of Saviour, he is a victim voted to the justice of his heavenly Father; sufferings

ings and tribulations are his portion ; his human nature enables him to suffer ; his divinity enhances the merit of his sufferings, and gives them an infinite value, proportioned to the enormity of the offence committed against a God of infinite majesty. O admirable contrivance of the divine wisdom, to reinstate fallen man in his original birth right ! Now, Christians, you are no longer surpris'd to see the Man God subject himself to the law of circumcision. He is a Saviour ; the more painful the observance of the law is, the more he thinks himself bound to submit to it. What justly challenges our admiration and astonishment, and ought to be the constant object of our gratitude and thanksgiving is, that overflowing charity that induced him to offer himself to his heavenly Father as the Redeemer of the world. But when once he undertakes the task he engages to do, whatever was necessary, in the order of the divine decrees for the completion of this great work, he fulfils. What would become of the rueful race of man, had not so powerful a mediator interposed in their favour, and cancelled the handwriting that was against them ? Their minds clouded with ignorance, their hearts violently bent on evil, their passions headstrong and rebellious, they were in a degraded state, out of which they could not raise themselves. In vain would they water the earth with their tears, and rend the air with their sighs ; their tears and sighs are not what the divine Justice requires. Nothing less than an omnipotent hand could have rescued them out of that abyss of misery into which sin had plunged them. The pride and disobedience of man were to be expiated by the humiliation and obedience of the Man God ; the pardon of the sinner was to be obtained by an High Priest without spot or blemish. Heaven and earth were to be reconciled by the effusion of his blood, which he begins to shed on the day of his circumcision. By submitting

submitting to the law of circumcision, a law made for sinners, he suffers his sacred flesh to be branded with the infamous mark of sin; he hides his glory, and innocence under that veil, appears as a sinner, and is, therefore, liable to be treated as such. Now, the blood of the new Covenant begins to flow; now the prophecies begin to be accomplished, which foretold, "that the great God of majesty would be ranked among sinners; that he in whom the nations were to be blessed, would become an object of malediction for them." Now, in fine, we begin to have a Saviour, a Mediator, a Redeemer! If his heavenly Father wants a victim, here is a victim worthy of him, a victim who unites in his adorable person whatever is necessary to disarm the wrath of heaven. Methinks I hear the divine Infant cry out to his Father in the transports of his love, "strike, O my Father, strike! let all thy vengeance fall on me."

Now, Christians, you will tell me, that the redemption of man was to be effected by the death of our Saviour, and not by his circumcision. But do you not see how clearly these two mysteries are connected? Is not his circumcision then an acceptance, written in blood, of all he was to suffer? It is. Is it not an earnest of our redemption? Yes, as St. Paul observes: true, there is some interval of time between the two events, but you may consider this bleeding infant as already dying for the sins of mankind. Yes, all his future sufferings are as present to him, as the painful operation which he actually undergoes. He sees himself pale, disfigured, exhausted, loaded with infamy, and expiring on a cross; he sees all this, and he is satisfied. He knows how far the justice of an avenging God can go, and by his circumcision he solemnly declares that he is prepared for all its rigours. He sees Mount Calvary before him; he is willing to appear there; to give the strongest

proof of his love for man, by shedding the last drop of his blood for him. His death is already signed, he is a victim prepared for the altar; he only waits for the deadly blow which is to consume his sacrifice. If he lives longer, it is only to suffer more. Has he not every right to the name of Saviour; that name so expressive of his goodness and mercy, and of all the tender effusions of his heart? We may apply to him in a stronger and more emphatical sense, what is said of the brave Eleazer in the first book of the Machabees: *He delivered himself up to raise his people, and acquire an immortal name*; and will not the name of Jesus be a name of praise and adoration for endless ages? Has it not been carried to the extremities of the earth? Let the pride and vanity of man feed on empty titles, which he never deserved, and never will. Jesus begins by defending this adorable name, and then he takes it as his due. Let conquerors take their titles from the countries they have subdued by their destructive arms, titles purchased by the blood of thousands, by the tears of widows and orphans; must they not appear in the eye of reason as scourges of the human race, as instruments of the divine wrath, as men born for the ruin of their fellow-creatures? But how amiable is the name of Jesus. How endearing that title, which he purchased by his own blood! Let the lisping tongues of innocent babes learn devoutly to invoke the name of Jesus! Let the last sounds of our dying voice, pronounce that glorious name, which strengthens our faith, animates our hope, and speaks life to us in the midst of death. How happy should we be, had we the name of Jesus engraved on our hearts in indelible characters of love! Were he always present to our minds, how could we think of crucifying him afresh by our sins; and yet strange insensibility! this is the return you generally make him for all his love.

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What more could he have done for you, than he has done? What an idea ought you to have of your immortal souls, for which Jesus paid so great a ransom? And yet, the affair of your salvation, that only important affair, is that which you neglect most. Is it not sacrificed to criminal pleasure, to sordid interest, to those trifling objects which engage your attention here below? Look on yourselves. Will you suffer nothing for the love of him, who has suffered so much for the love of you? Do you imagine that by the sufferings of Jesus, you are dispensed with from suffering any thing for your sins? Is it reasonable, that the God of all holiness should be at the entire expence of your salvation, and that you should contribute nothing towards it? No, this was never his intention; that he, who was incapable of sin, should bear all the punishment due to sin, and that sinners should be quite at their ease. You must endeavour, according to the advice of the apostle, to supply what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ. Nothing is wanting on his part; he has perfectly satisfied the justice of his heavenly Father; he has clearly pointed out to you, by his precepts and example, the way that leads to everlasting happiness: but you must take care to walk in that way, and apply to your souls the merits of his sufferings, otherwise they will not avail you. He has fulfilled the character of Saviour, let us on our part, comply with our duties as Christians. But, how is this to be done? By observing the law, which he, as our teacher and legislator has established of a spiritual and Christian circumcision, a circumcision of heart; this is the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

It is clear from several passages of the Old Testament, that the Jews, to whom the law of circum-

cision was given, ought not to have rested in the external ceremony which the letter of the law prescribed; on the contrary, it was the will of God, that they should comply with the spirit of it; that they should rise from their carnal thoughts, to a spiritual circumcision. Accordingly, the prophet Jeremy exhorts them in the strongest terms to be circumcised unto the Lord; to circumcise their hearts, lest the fire of the divine wrath should be kindled against them, and which no one could extinguish. If this circumcision of heart were requisite in the Jewish dispensation, how much more so must it be in the law of grace, a law of charity and perfection? The nature and qualities thereof are set forth at large by the Apostle of the Gentiles; and from him we may learn to form a just notion of it. It is not an exterior circumcision, but an interior one which penetrates into the inmost recesses of the soul. It is not the work of man but of God, it sanctifies man in the sight of his God. It implies a retrenchment of all inordinate and superfluous desires; the keeping a strict guard and government over ourselves, a total abstinence from criminal, and a prudent reserve even in the lawful gratification of sense and appetite. To this interior circumcision, you are bound as Christians, as men engaged in a spiritual warfare, as candidates for eternal glory. In the first place you are bound to it as Christians. Yes; the same Apostle observes, that as the carnal circumcision was the seal of the covenant between God and his chosen people, so the spiritual circumcision is the seal of the new covenant between Jesus Christ and his followers. As Jesus Christ devoted himself entirely to your service, when he undertook the great work of your redemption, so should you devote yourselves entirely to Jesus Christ, and regulate your thoughts, words, and actions by the unerring maxims of his holy law. He requires of you the sacrifice

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crifice of your hearts ; and without this, he will not be satisfied with any thing else you can give him. You must, then, renounce whatever you find vicious in yourselves, otherwise you cannot belong to Jesus Christ. This is a necessary consequence of your vocation to the Christian religion, which prescribes a spiritual worship. You have been regenerated in the second Adam ; and your baptism is that mystical grace, in which the corruption of the old man should be buried for ever. But as long as you suffer corruption to reign in your souls, the reign of Jesus Christ cannot be established therein. The bonds of faith may indeed unite you to the body of the faithful ; but, you dead members, you belong not to the more noble part of the Church, while you are strangers to the spirit with which it is enlivened and animated. If you mean to live to Jesus Christ, you must endeavour to die to yourselves, to your disorderly passions, to your sinful inclinations. Here, Christians, you may observe, how pure, how sublime the morality of the gospel is ; how strongly it bears the stamp of its divine original. The sages of antiquity by the strength of reason alone, affected to despise the world, its honours, riches, and pleasures. But their private conduct often disagreed with their pompous and imposing maxims which they delivered in public : if they renounced one vice, it was only to fall into another ; the demon of pride took possession of their hearts ; to die to themselves was a lesson they never could understand. But this is a lesson which the good Christian puts in practice : he is a temple of the living God ; and in this temple, his heart is the altar, priest, and sacrifice. Thus the grace of God triumphs, such are the happy effects of a spiritual circumcision ; it enables us to fulfil the glorious character of Christians, and prove ourselves true soldiers of Jesus Christ. We are all engaged in a spiritual warfare.

Many

Many and powerful are the enemies that meditate our ruin ; there is no safety for us, if our souls be not strongly fortified against their attacks. But the most dangerous enemy of man is, man himself. Hell and the world could never prevail against him, if his heart did not hold a secret correspondence with them. Out of the heart proceed not only evil thoughts, but also murders, adulteries, fornications, and blasphemies. If the fountain be poisoned, how can it be expected that pure salubrious streams will flow from it? If the tree be bad, it cannot produce good fruit. What then has the Christian to do? He must tear from his heart whatever he finds to be a source and principle of destruction to him: he must cut off all the enemies of God with a sword, which is that of spiritual circumcision: not even one of them is to be spared, for one alone if indulged, is enough to ensure his eternal reprobation. Now, Christians, if you enter into yourselves, you will find it to be generally true, that one favourite passion is the source of all your disorders. Your own experience will tell you what this passion is. If then you mean to reform your lives, to be masters of yourselves, and to keep your house in order, let all your attacks be levelled against it, and do not give over until you gain a complete victory, until you bring it under perfect submission to your God: for if there be any tie which holds your hearts wedded to this darling passion, there is no crime which you are not capable of. The mouth of the abyss is open wide to receive you: you stand on the brink of a precipice and you must inevitably fall. Yes, a trying and critical occasion will present itself to your reason, and your faith will be surprised as in a slumber. An unhappy moment will come on, and this will be enough to complete your ruin. One sin will lead to another; relapses will form a habit, this habit will be followed by a blindness and

and hardness of heart, and who but God himself can say, when or where you will stop.

Now, Christians, you see how necessary it is for you to guard your hearts against any rising passion, to check the progress of the growing evil, and to apply an antidote before the poison has had time to work its full effect. For if you have no command over yourselves in your cool moments, when the danger is at a distance, how can you pretend to act with authority, when temptation shall inflame your minds, and shake your hearts? You must learn to be moderate in your enjoyment even of what is innocent. For if pleasures, though innocent in themselves, be apt to carry you beyond bounds, if they be to you an occasion of sin, if they kindle criminal fires in your breasts, if they take up too great a portion of that precious time which was given you for much nobler purposes, they cease to be innocent in regard to you; and are likely in the end to pierce you through with many sorrows. Here, then, the sword of circumcision is to be applied, if you mean to consult your present and future happiness. This, Christians, is a grand motive for your complying with the law of the gospel circumcision. You are all candidates for eternal glory; for that state of unspeakable and supernatural happiness which Jesus Christ has purchased for you with his blood. Nothing, therefore, in the order of nature can entitle you to it. You may be honest from natural disposition; and do you imagine that mere honesty will open the gates of heaven for you? No, Christians, it cannot be, that a just God will ever confer a reward of infinite value, on those who have nothing but mere honesty to recommend them; and yet this is the favourite maxim of many who style themselves Christians. This, indeed, would be widening the way, which our Saviour himself declares to be narrow; it would be a cheap and easy method of gaining that for
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which God has paid so great a price. What then will entitle you to heaven? Nothing less than a life animated by the spirit of faith; a life of grace which will make you die to the desires of corrupt nature; nothing less than a circumcision of heart. Here is a source of solid merit which is subject to no illusion. Other virtues may be carried too far, and thereby cease to be virtues, but here you cannot do too much. No, the less you will be attached to yourselves, that is to say, to your irregular affections, to your evil inclinations, the more you will belong to Jesus Christ. The less you will have of inordinate self-love, the more you will have of the love of God. Yes, as St. Bernard observes, take away inordinate self-love, and you take away hell, you banish every vice, and introduce every virtue. Here is a virtue which lies open to men of all ranks, ages, and conditions. Not a day, not a moment of their lives in which they may not practice it; and thus by a little self-denial, they may qualify themselves for enjoying those pleasures which will fill the whole capacity of their souls.

Christians, how happy should we be, had we a proper relish for these pure and sublime maxims of the gospel! But alas! it is to be feared that there are many among us uncircumcised in heart, in whom the love of the world and themselves reigns without controul. However, it is to be supposed, that they mean to reform their lives one time or other; and can there be a more proper time for beginning the great work of their reformations, than the commencement of the new-born year, that it may be a new year to them, in the Christian sense of the word? Let the year you now enter upon, be a solemn warning to you. In general, Christians, let it be your care to redeem the time you have mispent; to wash away, by penitential tears, the sins of the last year and of your past lives, in acts of thanksgiving to the Almighty, who mercifully allows

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allows you time to appease his wrath, to serve him faithfully, and merit eternal glory. These are the objects which ought to engross your attention. How long will you suffer yourselves to be deluded by those phantoms of happiness which the world holds out to you. You are heirs of immortality, and would it not then be the height of folly to be taken up with the trifles of a day, instead of preparing yourselves for that state which knows no end? It is fast rolling towards you, like the tide of a vast ocean, ready to swallow up all human concerns, and to leave no traces behind it, except the consequences of your good or bad actions, which shall last for ever. My dear brethren, perhaps you will not live to see the end of this very year. This will be the case with thousands, who are as thoughtless and secure as you are now. In the course of this last year many have received the awful summons, who had as fair a prospect of a long life as you can have. Is your life better ensured than theirs? What reason have you to promise yourself another year? If you tell me, that the case is doubtful, and therefore you may hope for the best: I will answer you, that the case is doubtful, and therefore you ought to fear for the worst, and be provided against it. What security then, Christians, can you have against a surprise, except that of a speedy conversion? Let us, therefore, dedicate the new year and the remainder of our short lives to God; let us frequently implore his grace and mercy, according to the advice of our blessed Saviour: Watch ye, therefore; praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.

O Jesus! may thy holy instructions sink deep into our hearts, may the fruits of them appear in our lives, may we die to the world and live to thee. We adore thee, O Jesus! bleeding for our sins; may we suffer for them in a Christian manner,

ner, and be united to thee, our suffering head. May we be ready to quit this wretched world whenever thou shalt be pleased to call us out of it: but as nothing that is defiled can enter into the kingdom of thy heavenly Father; purify, then, our hearts from the dross of earthly affections, and consume with the fire of thy divine love, whatever may be lurking there. We make to thee, this day, a tender of our hearts; accept the offering, O Lord, and make it worthy of thyself. May our days and years be full; may they abound in good works; and when time shall be no more, may we, O Jesus! enjoy thy blessed sight for ever and ever. Amen.

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S E R M O N VI.

ON FASTING.

For the First Sunday of Lent.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungry. Matt. iv. 2.

DEAR Christians, as the Church, during these days of salvation, calls us forth to a course of fasting and penance, she proposes to us the example of our blessed Saviour, who fasted forty days and forty nights without taking the least nourishment for so long a time. He who was sanctity itself, did not stand in need of corporal austerities, either to atone for past sins, or to guard against future ones, for he was entirely incapable of sin. He fasted for our instruction, to shew us how we ought to arm ourselves against that host of temptations which the enemy of our souls is continually raising against us. The spirit of God led our Saviour into the desert, and regulated his fast; guided by the same holy spirit, the Church has prescribed to her Children, such an imitation thereof as might be suitable to their weakness. One would imagine that all possible allowances have been made, that might induce

duce us to the observance of the law, so venerable for its antiquity and for the authority by which it is established. Not satisfied with these allowances, we are ever forming new plans, in order to soften whatever rigours we pretend to discover in this penitential fast, and make them more palatable to flesh and blood: after all our contrivances, we shudder at the approach of the fast of Lent.

How many in the midst of their fasts seek their own will, and not the will of God. Anger, hatred and revenge, reign in their hearts without controul; their pride and their glory is to thwart and mortify those against whom they form any dislike, and therefore their fasts must be an abomination in the sight of the Lord. The most frivolous pretext is considered as a sufficient plea for a dispensation; we are alarmed at the danger to which we imagine our constitution will be exposed; we study to find out plausible pretexts, which our self-love will improve and form into a forcible one.

When we look back and take a view of the primitive Christians who received with joy the promulgation of this law, who after having fasted the entire day, scarce allowed themselves what was necessary to support nature; are we not covered with shame and confusion? Can we suppose that these holy souls stood more in need of fasting than we do? No, surely; but then their faith was a lively one; they were obedient children of the Church; they knew the value of mortifications and self-denials; at the same time, they were convinced that this was not doing too much to purchase heaven. But what is the faith of the generality of Christians now a days? It is dead indeed, the spirit of penance and obedience is extinguished in their souls; and, while they gratify their corrupt inclinations, they lose all taste and relish for heavenly goods. Christians, whatever the disorders of your lives may be, you have now a favorable opportunity
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for repairing them all; nothing can be more conducive to this end than a faithful observance of the fast prescribed at this holy time. Fasting, according to the spirit and intention of the Church, implies certain dispositions, from which it derives its full value and merit. The fast itself, and the dispositions which ought to accompany it, shall be the subject of the following discourse. In the first part I shall endeavour to lay before you the necessity and advantages of fasting in general, and of the fast of Lent in particular; in the second the dispositions required of you that our fasting may be agreeable in the sight of God.

O divine Saviour! whom we have so often provoked by our sins, whose mercies we have so often trampled under foot, prostrate before thee we acknowledge our baseness and ingratitude: Let the sense we have of our misery plead in our favour, at least, thou wilt listen to the voice of thy Church crying out in mournful accents: Spare, O Lord, spare thy people: turn away thine anger from us, enlighten our understandings, inflame our wills, that we may clearly see the power and efficacy of holy fasting, that we may cheerfully embrace it. But above all, grant us these dispositions without which our fast cannot be such an one as may be pleasing to thee. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, saying in the words of the Angel, *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Had man persevered in that state of original righteousness in which he was created, when the body was perfectly subject to the soul, it would not be necessary to call it to order by fasting and other corporal austerities. But, alas, we feel the unhappy consequences of our disobedience.

As

As Saint Paul observes, the inferior appetites are ever craving indulgence, and if not brought under subjection, they force the mind into a criminal compliance, when he speaks of a law of our members which rises in opposition to the law of our reason, and endeavours to draw us into sin. Your own experience will tell how often you have been defeated in the combat: Instead of maintaining the superiority of the soul over the body, as you are bound to do, you frequently allow the body the command; you listen to the suggestions of flesh and blood, and thus, the voice of reason and religion is lost in the tumult of your passions: you extinguish the light that is within you, and thus blinded, the government of the mind being lost, a wide door is open to iniquity. Hear your own hearts speaking for me. Yes, and is it not necessary to prevent those dreadful evils by keeping your bodies under the salutary restraints of religion, to check the progress of the disorders they give rise to? Can any thing be more conducive to this end than holy fasting? To deprive them of certain gratifications which are allowed at another time, is to weaken their power over you and to satisfy the divine Justice for the excesses into which they have hurried you. You have abused God's creatures to the prejudice of your immortal souls; and is it not reasonable that in making use of them you should observe certain wholesome regulations for a time, to testify the sorrow and displeasure you conceive at your guilt, and make those very things the matter of your punishment, which were before the matter of your transgressions. Will the Lord remember your past iniquities? Will he not cast them behind his back? When he shall see these bodies of yours, which before were bodies of sin and corruption, now so purified by fasting and other works of mortification, as to become once more the temples of the Holy Ghost, and disposed to receive the blessings

blessings which he bestows. Fasting, then, is a powerful and proper atonement for past offences ; it is also an antidote against future ones. All works of self-denial are naturally disagreeable to man, and apt to create in him an aversion to whatever compels him to exercise severity against himself ; he knows that sin is the cause of this severity, by fasting he feels the smart of sin, and is deterred from making another trial of that which has already cost him so dear. Besides, fasting purifies the soul, raises her above all earthly things, qualifies her for the sublime gifts of prayer and contemplation, draws down the divine grace to strengthen her against temptation, and consecrates the body as a living victim to God, and makes the whole man more orderly and vigorous in the pursuit of heavenly goods. This is the account which the Church in her office gives of holy fasting : And if we consult the inspired writers we shall find striking passages, and examples strongly setting forth the necessity and advantages of this penitential exercise.

We may observe, that whenever the prophets, who were divinely commissioned to instruct the Jewish people, exhorted them to penance they put them in mind of fasting, and humbling themselves before the offended majesty of God. The prophet Joel, having painted in the most lively colours the desolation of the house of Judea, the cessation of public worship, and the other grievous calamities, with which the Lord was to visit this rebellious people, charges the priest to assemble them all, both young and old, that they may observe an holy and solemn fast. Regardless of that strict connexion which is required in human compositions, filled with the divine Spirit he rapidly passes on to the day of judgment, that great and dreadful day, and having described the wonderful signs that are to precede it, he addresses the people in these remarkable words : Now then, says the Lord, turn to me with

with your whole hearts in fasting, and in weeping and in mourning. If fasting were an indifferent practice, that might be omitted at pleasure, would God himself so strongly recommend it to his people, as a proper means of satisfying his justice and drawing down his mercies on the sinner? How powerfully it contributes to these purposes appears from the many instances of this kind, with which the sacred writings furnish us in abundance.

The prophet Jonas denounces the vengeance of God against the Ninivites, he declares that after forty days, Ninive shall be no more; at once both king and people cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes, observe a general fast, extend it even to the brute beasts; the anger of the Almighty is appeased, and the sentence is reversed. The wicked Ahab, as the Scripture strongly expresses it, was sold over to iniquity, the crying sins of injustice, murder and idolatry had rendered him abominable in the sight of God; but when the prophet signifies to him the unhappy death allotted him, and the disasters that were to fall on his entire race, struck and alarmed he covers himself with sackcloth; he lies in ashes; he fasts and obtains from heaven a mitigation of the sentence. Christians we are all sinners; nothing can be more to our purpose than to expiate our sins in this life. From what has been laid before you it is clear that fasting is one of the principal means of attaining this end; it is then both useful and necessary.

As a farther proof of the advantages of fasting it may be observed, that the greatest saints have been always most remarkable, for the constant observance of this salutary discipline. We read that Moses, in order to prepare himself for receiving the Tables of the law from the hand of God, fasted forty days and forty nights; but having seen the people rebel against their God, and worship the Golden calf the work of their own hands, seized

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with an holy indignation he cast the Tables on the ground, and broke them in their sight. He fasted again and declares himself, that his motive was to atone for the sins of the people, to appease the wrath of heaven, that he might receive the law a second time. The Lord heard his prayer, and granted his request. Was it not fasting that prepared Elias for a familiar interview with God, and the prophet Daniel for those heavenly visions, by which he was enabled to describe future events with the clearness and precision of an historian relating facts, of which he had been an eye witness? Judith and Esther, those great heroins, whose names shall be ever illustrious for their piety and other virtues, distinguished themselves in a particular manner by the rigour of their fasts: by fasting they were qualified to be preserved in the hands of God to save their country from impending ruin. When we come to the times of our blessed Saviour we find the Baptist, that worthy precursor of his divine Master, neither eating nor drinking as our Saviour says, or in other words, leading a life quite different from that of the rest of men; a life of continual fasting and mortification. And did not our Saviour consecrate the austerity of the Baptist by the encomiums he bestowed on him? But what is more to the purpose; he sanctified fasting by his own example, arming himself thereby against the temptations of Satan. He inculcates the necessity of it in the strongest terms; when he declares, that there are evil spirits, which cannot be cast out but by fasting and prayer. Did not the Apostles, as their Acts testify, dispose themselves by fasting for those successful labours by which they diffused the light of the Gospel over the world, and reared the standard of the Cross on the ruins of idolatry? And is not fasting even to this day a necessary preparation for those who are called to the ministry of Jesus Christ? These examples

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incontestably prove that what is so strongly recommended by the practice of the most eminent saints in the Old law, of our blessed redeemer, and his Apostles in the New, and favoured with visible marks of the divine approbation, must be highly pleasing in the sight of God and profitable to our souls.

Notwithstanding the many advantages of fasting; is it not probable that in case nothing were determined on it, and that it were left to the discretion of each individual; the far greater number of Christians would totally neglect it, or be careless and indifferent about it? To obviate these inconveniencies, the Church has made a general law, by which she has marked out certain days, and certain parts of the year for the holy exercise of fasting; and this law we are bound to obey unless we mean to pass for heathens and publicans. Of the several fasts ordained by the Church the fast of Lent is the principal one. That keeping the fast of Lent is the practice of the Church now a days, is a fact, of which you are all witness, and which no one can deny without raising the whole body of the faithful against him. That this was also the practice of the Church, from the earliest times, may be proved precisely in the same manner, by the concurring testimonies of those who lived in them times, and who could no more be ignorant of what was generally observed by the Church in their days, than we can be of what is generally observed by her now. And here we have the most respectable vouchers for the antiquity and obligation of the fast of Lent, and the most unexceptionable witnesses. It would be endless to quote all the Fathers who are unanimous on this head, a few of them will suffice. Saint Ambrose declares that the fast of Lent is not a human invention, but a divine precept: that whoever refuses to comply with it is a rebel and a prevaricator. Saint Je-

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Some speaking of the same fast says, we observe our Lent according to the tradition of the Apostles, in this the whole world agrees with us: He observes that we are at liberty to fast at other times of the year, but that there is a wide difference between what we are bound to do, and we freely choose for ourselves, giving hereby clearly to understand that the fast of Lent is a fast of strict obligation. This is confirmed by the great Saint Augustine who pronounces: It is sinful not to observe the fast of Lent, when there are not sufficient reasons for an exemption. Saint Leo comprises the antiquity and the obligation of the fast of Lent and that it is come down to us from apostolical tradition, that it is binding under pain of sin. Far be it from any one to say that the institution of Lent is a piece of human invention a mere popular devotion; that it is a matter of indifference whether we fast or not, provided our hearts are pure and upright in the sight of God. It is true the one is the mean point: but is the other to be neglected? Is it a matter of indifference to rebel against the will of God, announced to us by the voice of his Church? Was it a matter of indifference that Adam eat of the forbidden fruit? No surely we feel in a sensible manner the baneful consequences of his prevarication. Our degeneracy has compelled the Church, to make many and great alterations in the manner of observing the fast of Lent; she has been reduced to the necessity of those who are shipwrecked, who when they cannot save all, save as much as they can. But the very remains of this primitive institution challenge our highest respect: the obligation of the precept is as strict as ever and the violation of it more incurable. As we are bound to fulfil this law, it is our business to know what the law is, and what it requires of us. You are in general well acquainted with the manner of keeping the Lent.

However it may not be amiss, to lay before you, in a few words, the present discipline of the Church in this point. Besides one meal during the four-and-twenty hours, you may take without scruple a light repast or collation; but you must observe, that this collation is to be quite different from the ordinary meal, both as to the quantity and quality of what you take; and that in this matter you must proceed with caution and according to the exigencies of your respective constitutions. The obligation of keeping the Lent in this manner, begins at the age of one-and-twenty years complete, and continues as long as we are able to fulfil the precept, nor does old age alone exempt us from it. Such is the law; so far has the Church condescended to the weakness of her children.

But besides these general allowances, there may at times be a particular one in favour of this diocese; in consequence of which the obligation of abstaining from flesh meat which was considered and is now limited in such a manner as to be scarce sensible except at the conclusion of this penitential course. Christians, this is a remarkable indulgence; it is a relaxation of discipline unknown to the times of primitive fervour: however, it is in your power to sanctify this indulgence by making a proper use of it. Let the poor, on whose account it was principally granted, feel the benefit of it; endeavour by plentiful almsdeeds and other good works to secure the mean object for which fasting and abstinence were ordained, that is, to repair all the disorders of our lives, and establish the divine grace in your souls. Thus you will make amends for the lenity with which you are treated, and keep up the spirit of the law, while you are dispensed with from a part of the observances which the letter of it requires.

Remember that you are now in a particular manner summoned to repentance, to answer the gracious

cious call of heaven, and improve to the best advantage every moment of this precious, this acceptable time. Observe the Lent may be called the spring of Christian souls; suffer it not to pass away until you renew the principles of the spiritual life, until you cast off the old man and put on the new. Can the sinner, who has his eternal welfare at heart, wish for a more favourable opportunity than the present to work out his salvation, when he sees the whole Church join in a body, and offer an holy violence to heaven in order to reconcile him to his offended God? Will he take no pains to have a share in the pious exercises, and good works of the faithful, in the treasures of grace, which are open to all the Christian world at this holy time? How he is to avail himself of these advantages, and the dispositions requisite for this purpose, will be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

The principal dispositions necessary, to make our fast pleasing in the sight of God, are a spirit of prayer and penance, almsdeeds, and refraining from all manner of sin. In the first place, nothing can be more to our purpose, than to pour out our souls in prayer, and humble ourselves before the offended majesty of God. By fasting we declare that we are sinners, that we are willing to recover the divine favour and obtain fresh supplies of grace, against all future attacks. How can we expect such blessings as these without fervent prayer; or can we think that our prayers will be heard, if we do not pray like humble penitents, who are impressed with a sense of their guilt? We ought to consider ourselves as engaged in a course of public penance to atone for the sins of our whole lives, to satisfy the divine Justice, and leave nothing unpaid of that great debt of which we know a strict account

count shall be demanded of us to the last farthing. Fasting and prayer are mutual helps and supports to each other, fasting fits the soul for prayer, and prayer is the spiritual nourishment which gives strength and vigour to fasting. Humility ought always to accompany our prayers, but now in particular when we send up our sighs and groans to heaven to obtain mercy. This should be the substance of our prayers: Deal not with us, O Lord, according to the sins we have committed, nor punish us according to our iniquities, turn away from us the scourge of thy wrath; remember not our past offences; but let thy mercies make haste to prevent us; for we are poor and miserable. Help us, O God, our salvation, for the glory of thy name. Deliver us, and shew us mercy in the pardon of our sins. These are the prayers of the Church, and whoever attends to the several parts of the divine office at this holy time, will find that it breathes every where sentiments of the most sincere and edifying compunction. Let the sinner unite his prayers to those of so many pious souls, who are imploring the divine Mercy in his behalf? If he wants a favourable time, here it is for him; "Let him seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near."

The second disposition required of us is, that we relieve the poor in their necessities. The Church to the practice of this virtue repeatedly exhorts us in the words of the prophet *Isaias*: "Deal thy bread to the hungry, bring the needy and harbourless into thy house, when thou seest one naked cover him, and despise not thy own flesh." She supposes, as the very nature of fasting implies, that your frugal and temperate mode of living will enable you to lay in an ample stock for the poor representatives of *Jesus Christ*. Whatever you save from your ordinary expences is not to be applied to your own temporal benefit, for this would be a mere worldly

worldly œconomy ; but it should be applied to the relief of the poor and the benefit of your souls. The holy Fathers consider almsdeeds as a necessary condition to make your fast have the desired effect, in obtaining for you the remission of your sins, and the powerful support of the divine grace. Saint Augustine is remarkably clear on this head ; imagine not, says this great saint, that fasting alone is sufficient to heal the wounds of sin : No, you must accompany it with alms ; and while you punish yourself, fail not to bring comfort to your neighbour ; then will you find the benefit of your austerities, when you open your bosom, and pour forth your heart in relieving others. If you are true penitents you will not neglect such powerful means of cancelling your offences, and recovering the favour of the Almighty : Whatever you apply to such purposes is laid up as a never-failing treasure in that place, “ where the rust doth not consume nor the moth devour.” Christ is pleased to consider what is done to the poor as done to himself ; and you know, that on the last day he will exclude for ever from his blessed sight those who have not relieved their fellow creatures in their necessities. It is then your interest to make almsdeeds go hand in hand with your fasts. The rich in particular ought to beware lest they suffer a spirit of luxury and extravagance to break in upon them during this holy time ; if they do, what will become of the poor, and of the alms which ought to accompany their fasts ?

If by an unchristianable management, one meal in this time of penance be more costly and luxurious than many of their ordinary meals during the rest of the year, instead of saving considerably something for the poor, they would not be able to allow them as much now as at any other time. This would be perverting and not sanctifying the Lent, which is a time of penance and mortification,

tion, and not a time of luxury and extravagance; a time set apart for the practice of all good works, and for those of charity in particular. But as the necessities of the poor have obtained indulgences for us all, those whom God has blessed with abilities, they are doubly bound to ease the distresses of their fellow creatures; not to be attentive to this duty in the course of the present Lent would be an act of injustice; it would be frustrating the wise and good ends, which the dispensation has in view. Even they who on account of the narrowness of their circumstances cannot assist the poor in the same manner, may instruct and comfort them, visit them when sick, pay them every attention in their power, and do all this with a truly charitable spirit, which must render them highly pleasing in the sight of God.

The third and most essential disposition is, that we fast from sin, and carefully shun whatever gives occasion thereto. The Church observes and repeatedly exhorts us during this holy time, when she says; "Let the wicked man forsake his evil ways, and the unjust man his thoughts, and return to the Lord; and the Lord will have mercy on him." The holy Fathers are unanimous in enforcing the necessity of this grand and general fast. They declare that a Christian fast ought to be observed more according to the spirit than the letter of the law. That to abstain from certain meats is not the true fast, unless we recommend it by good and regular life, and make the fruit of it appear in our conduct; that in vain we deprive the body of certain kinds of food while the soul is debased by criminal indulgences. And is it not evident, that your main object during this time of penance should be to regulate your passions, and keep them within the bounds which the law of God prescribes? You fast in order to satisfy the divine Justice for the sins you have committed, and would it not be strange

strange and unaccountable if you provoked God by your sins at the very time that you pretended to appease him by your fasts? And is there any thing more common than this. This is building with one hand and throwing down with the other; is it a Pharisaical fast, or rather the fast of hypocrites. The Jews were very exact in complying with the letter of the law, they were remarkable for their vigorous fasts; but, because they followed their own wills oppressed the poor and committed other crimes; the Almighty declared that this was not the fast which he had chosen. What then is the fast which the Lord has chosen: let us hear it from himself: Break all the bounds of iniquity; cast off all those burthens of sin which weigh thee down. You see then, my dear Christians, that something more is required of you, than a mere ceremonial fast: Yes, you must turn to the Lord with all your hearts, you must rend your hearts and not your garments. Let those, who are engaged in habits of sin, look to themselves, and see why their fasts have been so fruitless.

Do you sincerely desire to reap the benefits of your fasts? Let those who were of a proud overbearing spirit, who made the cries of the poor ascend continually to heaven, and demand vengeance against them, now humble themselves under the powerful hand of God, and relieve and comfort their indigent fellow creatures, whom they were wont to oppress and persecute. Let those who ran on in a round of criminal pleasures, who swallowed iniquity like water, who by their shameful excesses debased the noblest faculties they had received from their Maker; now punish their sinful flesh, solicit heaven for their pardon; engage the poor by frequent almsdeeds, to send up their petitions for them, and become as pure and spotless in their morals, as they were before profligate and abandoned. Let even those, who not guilty of flagrant transgressions,

transgressions, went on in an easy indifferent way, and by their sloth and indolence suffered many failings and imperfections to grow upon them, now awake from their spiritual slumber, and by all the exercises and good works suitable to this holy time, endeavour to work out their salvation in fear and trembling. Let the change of your lives be more remarkable than the change of your diet. Represent to yourselves Christ calling you from his cross, and conjuring you by his sacred wounds to return to him on the day of his mercy: listen to his voice and slumber not in sin. Let each individual say to himself; this Lent may be the last of my life, perhaps the Lord will call me out of the world before the expiration of it, and shall I not make the best use of every moment of it: I have seen many Lents pass over my head, but alas to my shame and confusion, without thy assistance, O Lord, this Lent will pass away like the rest. Grant then I beseech thee that the holy use I make of it, may repair all past injuries; that by a religious observance of the fast prescribed, by humble prayer, almsdeeds and other good works I may be disposed to celebrate in a proper manner the doleful mystery of thy passion, and the glorious triumph of thy resurrection; that I may with a pure and spotless conscience approach the adorable sacrament of thy altar; that I may rise from the death of sin to the life of Grace, from the life of grace to the life of glory; a blessing which I sincerely wish you all, Amen.

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S E R M O N V I I .

ON HEAVEN.

For the Second Sunday of Lent.

And he was transfigured before them. Matt. xvii. 2.

THE transfiguration of the Lord is the consoling subject which the Church lays before you in the Gospel of this day. How remarkable this fact is in all its circumstances, appears from the account given of it by the Evangelists. Our blessed Saviour, accompanied by three of his Disciples, Peter, James and John; goes up to an high mountain apart, and there transforms himself in a glorious manner before them: his face shines like the sun, his garments are white as snow, Moses and Elias, the two greatest personages that ever appeared under the old law, stand forth as witnesses to the truth of his doctrine, and the divinity of his sacred person. Peter is in raptures, he wishes never to be removed from so delightful a scene, he cries out in the excess of his joy: Lord, it is good for us to be here, if thou wilt; let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias. God the Father

ther interposing in a miraculous manner spreads around them a bright cloud, from whence is heard a voice saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." The Disciples are filled with terror and astonishment: they fall prostrate on the ground. Christians, you form to yourselves a high idea of your Saviour's glorious appearance on the mount, you would wish to be witnesses of it, and if you were, you would be affected as Saint Peter was, and cry out with him: Lord, it is good for us to be here. How was this but with the Divine assistance, a glimpse of that happiness, the full enjoyment of which you may secure to yourselves if you please. From this transitory display of his glory our Saviour meant that his Disciples should raise their hearts to that kingdom of everlasting bliss, where he appears in the fulness of his Majesty. They faithfully answer the gracious views of their heavenly Master, and in the midst of crosses and afflictions, they looked up to the incorruptible crown that awaited them; They even thought nothing of all their labours, because they had heaven in view which was to be the reward of them; and if we were animated with the same spirit, all our pretended difficulties would vanish at once. Our holy religion would point out to us the way of the cross, as the way to true happiness, and and though our lives were one continued round of affliction, we would be convinced, that heaven is worth more than all this: our misfortune is, that we are so much taken up with the perishable goods of this life, as to lose sight of those that are everlasting. Let us begin now at least to shake off this unhappy attachment to a wretched world which does not deserve half the pains we take for it. I shall endeavour, with the divine assistance, to give you a faint idea of that happy state which every Christian ought to aspire to, and to convince you from the little we know of it, that the
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glory thereof is exceedingly great: this shall be the subject of the first part: this consideration will naturally lead me to the following conclusion, that we cannot do too much to attain to it; which will be the subject of the second part.

Bountiful rewarder of thy faithful servants. O Founder of the heavenly Jerusalem, enlighten our understandings, that we may as far as it is in the power of weak mortals contemplate the glories of this land of delights; inflame our hearts with an holy desire of securing to ourselves the possession of it: may this desire be efficacious; may it appear by our lives that we set a proper value on the rewards prepared for us. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, who having been distinguished on earth, is distinguished in heaven, and raised to an eminent degree of glory. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Reason enlightened by revelation enables us to form a judgment of the happiness reserved for us in a future state of existence. We know that an Almighty hand has fixed these everlasting mansions; he designs them for those who have resolutely withstood the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil, who have signalized themselves in the Christian warfare, and carried the prize of immortality by unremitted labours. His power is infinite, his goodness is equally so; and when he wills to display both the one and the other in a manner worthy of himself, who can pretend to set bounds to his magnificence? In this world of ours, where there exists the just and unjust: the goodness of God extends to all. The sun, moon and stars, the several parts of the system of the universe proclaim aloud the glory of their Maker. In this land of exile, he has done so much for sinful creatures, what will he

he not do in his glorious kingdom, the particular seat of his residence, into which nothing defiled shall enter. If we consult the sacred writings, we shall find striking expressions, strongly setting forth the gifts of the divine power, in favour of the citizens of heaven. The prophet *Isaias* transported at the thoughts thereof cries out: It is only there that God is magnificent. But you will say, does he not manifest himself in this world of ours? Do not his works point out to us his all powerful right, and is not all nature a book, in which every man may read characters of the divinity? And yet, what is all this if compared to the full display of his power and majesty in the heavenly *Jerusalem*? There are several other passages of Holy writ to the same purpose; that of *Saint Paul* deserves particular attention. He declares, that neither had the eye seen, nor the ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those that love him. We may then form in our imaginations whatever we conceive as glorious and desirable; we shall never come up to what is realized in heaven. If we must proceed with caution, and carefully follow the hints which the sacred writings furnish us with; we may observe three principal qualities which characterize the happiness of the Saints. The reason is obvious, it is in the power of the Almighty, to raise scenes infinitely more beautiful than we can imagine. He would cease to be what he is if in his wonderful works, he were to be limited by the contracted scale of our conceptions. How great then must our transports be, when the everlasting doors of heaven shall be opened to us, when from this land of clouds and darkness we shall ascend into the realms of light: From this land of misery to that delightful place, where the Almighty has exerted his power of creation, to make his friends completely happy. Let

us now and then heave a sigh towards our heavenly country, and under the guidance of divine revelation, enquire into the nature of that happiness which we expect to enjoy. Here we must proceed with caution; it perfectly satisfies the human heart, it is pure and unmixed, it is everlasting. First, it perfectly satisfies the human heart; every one may feel within himself an innate propensity towards happiness; this propensity is so strong that it attracts us forcibly, and if we direct it in a proper manner, we act conformably to the will of our Maker, who has implanted this principle in our hearts for the best purposes; accordingly we may ask the rich, the great, the powerful, are they perfectly happy? They cannot with truth answer in the affirmative. One would imagine that Solomon who was famed for his wisdom throughout the world, and for the glory and magnificence of his reign, had nothing to wish for to be completely happy: and yet he declares, that all his grandeur was vanity and vexation of spirit. Christians, it cannot be otherwise, the goods of this life are too insignificant to take up the faculties of an immortal soul, that was formed for something infinitely great, and by a contrary reason those of the next life must fill up all her desires; because they are exceedingly great, and calculated to promote her happiness to the utmost. For what can be more desirable than to see God face to face, to praise him to all eternity, to know his adorable nature, his infinite perfections, and clearly distinguish it from all earthly enjoyments, to be in full possession of delights, without the least apprehension or uneasiness in regard to their continuance. Oh, reviving thought, the citizens of heaven possess their God who is the end of their being, their sovereign good, the foundation of all good, and after this, can they have any thing to wish for? No wonder then that the royal Prophet should thus give

give vent to the transport of his soul, "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, my soul fainteth for the courts of the Lord."

Secondly, The happiness of the saints is pure and unmixed. The Almighty has wisely ordained that no earthly satisfaction should be perfect; we observe a mixture of good and evil, a succession of pain and pleasure, of joy and sorrow; what seems agreeable in one respect proves disagreeable in another, and if we were to follow the light of reason alone, we would not set our hearts on any thing the world affords. Do not corroding cares very often haunt the throne? Do not the most elevated stations bring with them a multiplicity of duties, and point out those who are placed in them as slaves to the public. Besides, the higher they are raised the more they are exposed to the poisoned darts of envy, and in their public as well as private characters, they often bear the full weight of the public censure. Again, our own passions frequently disfigure the scene, and where is the comfort in a man's being crowned with riches and honours, when his mind is on the rack for more; there is no such thing as pure happiness to be found in this life, it is reserved for the next. There the joys of the blessed are as pure as the source from which they flow: There is nothing to embitter the delicious draught; no more tears, crosses or persecutions for them, they were tossed for a while on the boisterous waves of the world, but now they are happily arrived at the harbour of bliss. Landed on this peaceful shore they enjoy the fruits of their labours; they are at rest from the toils and troubles from the sins and miseries of the world, from the disturbance of passion, the vanity of pursuit, and the vexation of disappointment. Let us hear what the great Saint Augustine says on this head: O kingdom of everlasting bliss, where thou art present, O Lord, the hope of the saints, and the dia-

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dem of their glory, replenish them with joy on every side by thy blessed sight; O Lord, in this kingdom of thine there is infinite joy, mirth without sadness, health without pain, life without labour, light without darkness, felicity without any alloy, all good without any evil. Here youth flourishes that never grows old, life that knows no end, beauty that never fades, love that never cools, health that is never impaired, joy that never ceases. Here sorrow is never felt, complaint is never heard, matter of sadness is never seen, nor evil success ever feared. For they possess thee, O Lord, who art the perfection and crown of their felicity.

Thirdly, The happiness of the saints is everlasting. This world is a stage on which new scenes are exhibited every day; we see men from the height of prosperity and elevation fall into indigence and obscurity; we see numerous families ruined and dispersed in such a manner as to leave no traces behind them, where they once made a figure. But let me suppose, that a man enjoyed during the short period of his life all the riches and honours the world could heap upon him, must he not leave all this behind him, and yield to the stroke of death? How different then is our changeable state from that which excludes even the shadow of change or vicissitude. Yes, Christians, the happiness of the saints is as unchangeable as God himself. This is what the inspired Writers tell us, when they speak of a never fading inheritance, an eternal weight of glory, an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom of all ages, a kingdom that knows no end. Let us reflect awhile on this character of eternity, and we shall find that it completes the happiness of the saints. For let me suppose that it were to have an end even after millions of ages, they would wish that this distant period were never to come on; the nearer it approached the more their uneasiness encreased, they would not be completely

pletely happy in the case supposed, because their happiness would be limited as to its duration: and their desires would extend forward to a state of bliss, which would know no limits. O happy souls! after millions of ages your joys are as fresh as when you first entered the heavenly Jerusalem, what a communication of happiness is this. Christians, whatever you set an high value on, do not you wish to possess it as long as possible, the longer the term is the greater your satisfaction must be, and this very consideration considerably enhances its value? Judge then what your transports will be when your own experience will assure you that you possess the sovereign good, that in the possession thereof you are to be happy for ever and ever. So great is this happiness, that the power of language sinks beneath it: We can neither express nor conceive it, but we firmly believe that it is prepared for us. Let us then prostrate ourselves before that Almighty God, who so bountifully rewards his faithful servants. Let us extol and magnify his unalterable goodness; let our hearts be swallowed up in love and gratitude. Christians, indulge reflections of this kind, look down on this world with that noble indifference which religion inspires, raise your hearts to the joys of the next life, joys that will perfectly satisfy them, joys that are pure and unmixed, joys that are everlasting. If you do so, you will think nothing of the labours you undergo to purchase this precious pearl of the gospel, you will be convinced that you can never do too much to merit so great and so glorious a reward, this will be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

We all allow in speculation, that the happiness of the saints is very great; but few there are, or whose lives this knowledge has a proper influence

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The generality of mankind will tell you that they are satisfied if they can get the last places in heaven, that they have no ambition to rise higher: and would to God that they make serious efforts to secure to themselves these last places in the house of their heavenly Father, where every one is completely happy. It is to be apprehended that such discourses often proceed not from humility, but from an indifference, taking no pains in this life to obtain happiness in the next. The natural tendency of them is to lull people asleep, and beget in them a criminal indifference even with regard to the essential duties of Christianity. If heaven may be had on these easy terms, what will become of the several passages of holy Writ, where it is represented as a kingdom that suffers violence, as a strong citadel to be carried sword in hand, as a prize to be adjudged to the conqueror. If the broad way could lead thereto, our blessed Saviour would have never said, "How straight is the way and narrow the gate that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it."

The saints who walked in the footsteps of our Redeemer formed a proper idea of heaven, and their lives shew that they set a very high value on it. Before we enter into a detail, we may observe, that their authority ought to be very decisive in the present case. For as the happiness they now enjoy was the constant object of their desires, as their thoughts and actions were uniformly and invariably directed to the attainment of it, as they were enlightened by the Spirit of God, we must conclude, that they are the fittest persons to be consulted, when we would wish to know on what terms we are to be admitted to share in their bliss. When we take a view of the lives of the Apostles, what do we meet with but labours, crosses and contradictions? In the midst of all this what are their sentiments? According to the advice of their di-

vine Master they rejoice and are exceedingly glad, because their reward is great in heaven. The example of Saint Paul deserves particular notice. Was he not beset with dangers by sea and land, in cities and deserts, dangers from Jews, from Gentiles, from false brethren? Did he not endure the extremities of heat and cold, of hunger and thirst? Were not prisons, chains and scourges his portion? And yet he is far from thinking that this is doing too much to gain heaven: he declares, that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be put in competition with the glory which shall be revealed in us. He assigns the reason in another place where he says; that the sufferings of this life are light, and but for a moment, whereas the glory which is purchased by them is everlasting. With what cheerfulness did not the martyrs undergo the most excruciating tortures, which the rage of malice and infidelity could invent? One would think that racks, gibbets, fire and sword, and all the dreadful instruments of death changed their nature in favour of the holy sufferers, while they feel the merciless hand of the executioner, their hearts are filled with joy and confidence, they sing canticles of praise and thanksgiving, they see the dawn of the eternal day, they behold the heavens open, and a crown of glory prepared for them at the end of their course. There are many such instances to be met with in ecclesiastical history: I shall produce a remarkable one, that of Saint Ignatius bishop of Antioch. This worthy disciple of the Apostles is in the hands of the enemies of Christianity; he knows, that he is soon to fall a prey to their fury, and he takes his last farewell of his faithful flock, who were inconsolable for the loss of their pastor. My dear children, says he: I know my true interest, the reward of my victory is Jesus Christ: is not this enough to encourage me? Tyrants, executioners, flames, gibbets,

gibbets, wild beasts, breaking of bones, tearing of limbs, mangling of flesh, torments of all kinds come down on me at once, provided I enjoy thy presence, O Jesus, the object of my desires. Others who did not undergo this bloody trial, maintained their title to heaven by a painful and lingering martyrdom; they had the same passions that we have; but they triumphed over them; they wore the same flesh and blood that we do; but they were as pure as angels: they died to themselves every day, that they might live to their God. Many of them filled eminent stations in the world, and yet they were as free from its pernicious maxims, as if they had been entirely out of it; they formed an interior solitude within their hearts, where they kept up a sweet intercourse with their Maker; they practiced extraordinary rigours, the bare recital of which would be enough to strike us with astonishment. In the midst of all this, they considered themselves as unprofitable servants; all their sufferings appeared as nothing in their eyes, because they were convinced, that there was no proportion between their finite sufferings and an infinite happiness.

Christians, how different is your conduct from those of the saints? When any trifling mortification comes in your way, how painful is it to you; how many contrivances are used to make the bitter draught more palatable, and if you can avoid tasting it, you think yourselves happy? For instance, when the solemn fast of Lent breaks in upon the dissipation of the year, as an intolerable restraint, you complain of it as a burthen too heavy to bear. How many endeavour to make out, what they call good reasons for obtaining a dispensation; some go so far as to make it of no obligation. Then we are heard from all quarters complaints of disorders, the spirit of pride and self-sufficiency tells them, that they are the best judges of their own weak constitutions,

tutions, disgusts against this or that sort of food; they can eat nothing but what is forbidden. They forget the wise maxim of the law, which allows no man to be a judge in his own cause, they renounce the spirit of obedience, which is the life and soul of our holy religion. Christians, let us not be so indifferent with regard to the valuable remains of ancient discipline: think, that you ought not to be carried away by the hasty decisions of self-created divines; fasting a few weeks is not doing too much to atone for our sins, surely, we never reflect on what we owe the divine Justice, you are not obliged to all the austerities practiced by the saints, but you are obliged to lead penitential lives, and you will allow, that you ought to take as much pains for heaven, as you do for the goods of this life.

How attentive are worldlings to make a fortune, establish their families, and raise themselves to a degree of consequence. With what cheerfulness do they not undergo labour and fatigue, when their temporal interest is concerned? But when any thing is to be done to gain heaven, oh! then they are cold and languid: This is not the way to insure everlasting enjoyments. No! it is not in the nature of things, that a reward of infinite value, can be assigned by a just God, to those who take no pains for it. Christians, look to yourselves, if hitherto you have been insensible to this grand motive, an authority which cannot lead you astray, for the unerring word of truth itself assures you of it, which ought to have the greatest influence on your souls. Continue no longer in so dangerous a state, whatever inconvenience you may suffer, whatever portion of the cross may fall to your share; look up to the glorious inheritance to which you are called, and let the thought thereof be a cordial to your drooping spirits. When you are tempted to partake of the false joys of the world

world; and beset with the importunities of this sinful Babylon: Cry out with the Israelites in captivity: "How shall we sing or rejoice in a strange land! If I forget thee O Jerusalem! let my right hand be forgot, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if Jerusalem be not my chief joy." Let the poor in particular, to whom this world is a painful exile and a vale of tears, remember that if they sow in tears, they shall reap in joy, that they who mourn here below in a Christian manner, and bewail their offences, shall have their comfort hereafter. We are all engaged in a course of penance, let us repress the murmurs of flesh and blood, and tell this body of sin which we carry about us, that it must not be gratified: This is the way to purify both soul and body from all stains, and to satisfy the divine Justice, and maintain your title to that delightful place, that place of unspeakable joy, where we shall see, love and praise our God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N VIII.

ON THE DUTY OF PARENTS TOWARDS
THEIR CHILDREN.

For the Third Sunday of Lent.

He that is not with me, is against me, and he that gathered not with me, scattereth. Luke xi. 23.

THUS our Saviour replies to the Scribes and Pharisees, his declared enemies, who obstinately held out against the sacred truths he delivered, against the miracles he wrought. As teachers of the Jewish people, they ought to be the foremost in acknowledging him for their Messiah, in pointing him out as the Redeemer of the world, whom the Prophets for so many ages had in view. But instead of this, they carp at his words; they censure his actions; they make severe charges against him. Blinded by their inveterate prejudices they presume to say, that he wrought his miracles, in the name, and by the power of Beelzebub. Our Saviour exposes the inconsistency of the charge; for how could Satan be divided against himself? How could it be supposed, that he would contri-

bute

bute to the overthrow of his own empire? He concludes with these remarkable words: *He that is not with me, is against me, and he that gathered not with me, scattereth.* Christians, through the mercy of God, we have been called to the faith of Jesus Christ; we glory in being his disciples; we are therefore indispenfibly bound to act a different part from that, which the Scribes and Pharifees did; we are bound to declare openly in favour of Jesus Christ; and to fhew, that we are Christians, not in name only, but in reality. Yes: our light is to fhine before men, that they, feeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven. Linked together by the ties of fociety, by the bonds of charity, we are to contribute to the edification of our neighbour, and the clofer the ties are, the ftronger the obligation. From these general principles, you will conclude; that parents ought to be the first teachers and apoftles of their children; that they fail in one of their moft effential duties, if they do not ftudy to promote their falvation. It depends in a great meafure on the example and inftruction of the parents, whether the children fhall live according to the maxims of the Gospel, or in direct oppofition to them; whether they fhall gather with Jesus Christ, or fcat-
ter. If parents properly attended to this grand object, Religion might glory in her children, a happy fociety would be formed on earth, and millions of fouls would be gained to heaven. On the other hand, if they neglect it, the worft and moft ruinous confequences muft neceffarily follow. For if children be brought up without a fenfe of what they owe to God, to their fellow creatures, and to themfelves, if there be no check on their evil inclinations, no guard on their conduct, but left to themfelves, they will plunge into a life of diforder and licentiousnefs, a life that leads to an unhappy death, to an unhappy eternity. You fee, then, Christians,

Christians, the importance of the subject, which I mean to treat of in the following discourse. I shall endeavour, with the divine assistance, to lay before you, the obligation you are under, of giving your children a virtuous and Christian education; this shall be the subject of the first part. I shall also examine, how far you comply with this obligation, subject of the second, and give you a few directions as to the manner in which you ought to comply with it.

O Almighty Father of the universe, whose providence strongly reaches from end to end, and sweetly disposes all things; thou hast been pleased to appoint earthly parents to provide for the salvation of their children, enlighten their understandings, that they may clearly see the extent of their duty, inflame their wills, that they may cheerfully practice it. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of that blessed mother, whose attention to the infant Jesus ought to be the model of Christian parents. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

That Christian parents are bound to give their children a virtuous and Christian education; is one of those self-evident truths, which carry immediate conviction to the mind. Would not even a parent that had never been enlightened by the faith of Jesus Christ, be deemed brutal and divested of the common feelings of humanity, if he did not hear the voice of nature pleading powerfully in favour of his children, if he did not follow the light of reason which would suggest to him, that he ought to promote their happiness to the utmost. The height of his ambition would be, to see them in possession of riches, honours, and whatever else the world most admires. But when I speak

I speak of Christian parents, I speak of those, who have another life in view both for themselves and for their children. They must therefore educate them not for this miserable world only, but for heaven. In Christian children, I distinguish a natural and supernatural being: It is not enough to provide for their natural being, to give them food and raiment, or to establish them in the world: their supernatural being must be also provided for; they must be disposed to answer that end, for which the Almighty created them, which is nothing else than the enjoyment of himself. Is it not strange, my dear Christians, that truths so obvious are so little attended to, and that parents, who ought to know their duty, are guilty of the grossest neglect and violation of it? If any man, says St. Paul, "have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." In this striking passage, Christians, you cannot suspect any exaggeration; for the spirit of God spoke by the mouth of his Apostle. Let us draw the conclusions, which directly and immediately follow from it. You clearly see, that the heads of families are strictly bound to pay every attention to the moral and religious conduct of their meanest domestics; if they do not, they act in direct opposition to the principles of the holy religion they profess. For how can we say that the spirit of Christianity subsists among us, if we be not anxious to enlarge the boundaries of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, to perpetuate the knowledge of his holy name, and insure to him the love and obedience of all those, over whom we have any power or influence. On the other hand, if it be a matter of indifference to us, whether God be honoured or not by those who are under our charge, we betray his cause, and plainly shew that his faith is dead in our souls. If this be the case, what must we think

think of these parents, who neglect the education of those children, whom the Almighty has in a particular manner intrusted to their care; a strict account of whom he will require of their hands. Are they not bound to see, that they be instructed in the saving truths of the Christian religion, that they model their lives according to the maxims of the Gospel, that they be happy here and hereafter? Let me suppose that they are blameless in every particular, if they fail in this one point, they are to be considered as worse than Infidels. But, if parents should be so unhappy, as to give their children a bad education, if they inspire them with a love of the world and its false maxims, if by their discourse and example they withdraw them from God, instead of leading them to him, can we find expressions strong enough to paint their guilt? They renounce in practice the faith of Jesus Christ; they are apostates; they are worse than murderers: for they kill the souls of their children. O with what force will not the charge come home against them, which God himself made against those barbarous and unnatural parents, who transported by the rage of idolatry, sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the false divinities they adored? "Woe to that man," says our blessed Saviour, "by whom scandal cometh, woe to him, who scandalizes one of the little ones that believe in me, it were better for him, that a millstone were about his neck, and that he were cast into the depth of the sea." How many woes then Christians, will he pronounce against those parents who scandalize their own children, who, instead of exerting themselves to save their souls, precipitate their eternal ruin.

Christians, if you have a spark of faith or humanity in you, if you have an atom of the feelings of parents, you must be supposed to wish with all your hearts the salvation of your children: and
if

if you wish it, why do you not take some pains to secure it? Consider, what your children are in the eyes of religion: Before baptism they were unhappy descendants of Adam fouled with the stain of that original guilt, which we all bring with us into the world. The God of all purity notwithstanding the love he has for all his creatures could not call them his own, while sin disfigured them in his sight. You might then in their degraded state have considered them merely as your children; but the stain has been washed away in the salutary waters of regeneration; they are become the adopted children of God, heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and temples of the Holy Ghost. You have consecrated them to the Almighty; you have given them up to him as his property, and will you alienate them from him? Will you not keep for him the sacred deposits intrusted to your care? Will you not support and maintain the new being they have acquired in the order of grace, will you not bring them up in such a manner as may be suitable to their glorious destination? If you do not, you retract the solemn offering you made to your God; you commit an act of infidelity highly injurious to his sovereign majesty, and capable of drawing down on your heads the tremendous weight of his vengeance. What will become of your children when grown up, if they have no religious principles to direct them? Corrupt nature will lead them to evil; the bad example of others will hurry them into it, and a bad education will complete their misery. But you will say; they will return to a sense of their duty: this, indeed, might be expected, if they had got an early Christian education. In this case, it might be reasonably supposed, that when they would grow weary of the rugged and thorny ways of iniquity, the early impressions might regain their former force, and make them look back with
a longing

a longing eye on the happy days of virtue and innocence. But when they are left destitute of every advantage of education, what remains for them, when not one good principle has been instilled into their minds, but an act of extraordinary grace. And can you say, that the Almighty will grant them this extraordinary grace? No; you cannot carry your presumptions so far. Do then, what depends on you; risk not the salvation of those who are so dear to you, who are a part of your own flesh and blood; be not so cruel, as to deprive them of the powerful means of salvation which with the divine assistance, you may afford them. Though you should be insensible to other motives, your own eternal interest ought to have some weight with you. Your own personal sins are not the only ones you are accountable for; the sins of others, which you may give occasion to by your bad example, or otherwise, shall be also imputed to you. If this be the case, tremble at the account you have to render for the sins of your children, which you might have early prevented, and are therefore the unhappy offspring of your neglect. What answer will you make to Jesus Christ, when he will put the question home to you: What have you done with those children whom I purchased by my blood, stamped with the seal of the new covenant, and enriched with the choicest gifts of heaven? Give them back to me, such as you received them from me. Where are they? I know them not. They were temples of the Holy Ghost, but now they are so many dens of unclean spirits, they were objects of love, but now they are objects of wrath and indignation. Cursed parents, you have destroyed the efficacy of the power of my grace, and the merits of my sufferings. Render then an account of the blood of your children, whom you have spiritually murdered. Christians, can there be a more dreadful charge: How will you be able to stand

stand the shock? But this is not all: numberless evils flow from the same poisoned source. For, if you have neglected the education of your children, if you have given them a bad one, can you expect, that, when they become parents, they will attend to the education of their own children, or give them a better? Thus a chain of iniquity is formed in families from age to age, from generation to generation. Now, Christians, if you had early brought up your little ones in the way in which they ought to go, it is highly probable, that they would not depart from it in the more advanced stages of life; they would consequently take care, that the children, whom they receive from God should be given back to God by a virtuous and pious education. Thus should we see in families a succession of those qualities, which adorn the man, and characterize the Christian; qualities, which the world, wicked as it is, must admire. I have briefly laid before you your duty as parents, as to the manner in which you ought to comply with it, I shall now examine how far you comply with it, and give you a few directions. Subject of

THE SECOND PART.

If Christian parents brought themselves to a strict account on the manner, in which they educated their children, it is to be feared, that the far greater number would find themselves very deficient. I will endeavour to do this for them; and furnish them with a few hints which may be of use to them, whatever their situation in life may be; whether they be rich or poor. And first, I will ask the rich, how do they educate their children? They either totally neglect instructing them in the principles of their religion, or if they now and then, ask them a few questions on the subject, this

this is done in so great a hurry, in so careless a manner, that, one would think, the parents considered it as a matter of indifference. And indeed this seems to be the case with many of them; crowned with temporal blessings they forget that bountiful God, from whom they flow. Instead of shewing their gratitude to him by an exact compliance with the solemn duties of religion, they keep at a distance, and that for a series of years. One would imagine, that they are ashamed to be religious, as if it were a disgrace to their sense or reputation in the world, to think seriously of saving their souls. Full of their consequence, they claim the privilege of judging for themselves, on matters of which they are not judges: In short, they adopt the religion of the world, which is to have none at all.

Now, Christians, you may easily foresee what is to be expected from the children of such parents. Is it not to be dreaded, that the male children in particular will follow the bad example which the father sets before them, especially when the plan of their education is confined to this world, without any regard to the next. The young masters are taught to assume an air of forwardness, a freedom of behaviour which makes them set a high value on themselves. The consequence is, that they fancy themselves to be men, before they know how to think. As to the females, it would be but reasonable to suppose, that the mothers would early insil into their tender minds the love and fear of God. Instead of this, the main object of the mother's instructions is, to make them pleased with themselves, and passionately fond of pleasing others. A fashionable air, dress and manner are to be studied with the minutest exactness; if they read any thing it must be something very light and superficial, as to serious reading, they must have nothing to do with it; for it is supposed, that it would

would damp their spirits, and check that sprightliness, and vivacity which make them so agreeable. If they fail in a point of decorum in these little attentions which worldly politeness requires; the offence is capital, and they are sure to be punished for it. But if they fail in the essential duties which they owe to God, the omission is venial; it is easily pardoned, or quite overlooked. Thus the spirit of Christianity is laid aside in the education of children: There are masters and mistresses to improve their natural accomplishments, or to grace them with such as may be acquired; but there is neither master nor mistress for the science of salvation. O religion how art thou fallen! what is become of thee, when Christian parents, who ought to be thy Apostles in the midst of their families, totally forget thee!

As to the poor, I must allow, that if any apology could be made in the present case, it should be for them. Many of them earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and have very little time to attend to the education of their children. But the law of God does not require impossibilities. When the toils of the day are over, may they not leave their children about them at night, and teach them to praise that God, who gives them the homely but wholesome fare they partake of? May not the mother in particular, whose domestic cares keep them mostly at home, find many opportunities to discharge this important duty? May they not instruct them to the best of their power in those articles of the Christian faith, which are necessary for salvation? As to any further explanation of these points, they may refer them to the pastors of the Church, whose duty and glory it is to sow the seeds of virtue and religion in the minds of youth, and to ripen these flowers of Christianity into fruit.

Simple and illiterate persons may have more of the love of God in their hearts, than the most learned man, or the greatest philosopher; and may they not with the divine assistance kindle the sacred flame in their families? Happy parents, who sanctify themselves, and sanctify their children! But alas! this is far from being generally the case. How many parents leave their children buried in the grossest ignorance, no instructions on what they owe to God, to their neighbour or to themselves. And is it to be wondered at, if, when they grow up, they turn out so many savages. Others there are, who by their disorderly lives complete the ruin of their children: they consume in one day the earnings of the week. If they get a few pence together, which may be of use to the family at home, they are never easy, till they squander them abroad. Accordingly they set out, as if it were on a glorious expedition. But what is the consequence? Reason is lost, passion takes the lead; they return home like tyrants; nothing can withstand their fury; an uproar ensues; volleys of oaths and imprecations are discharged; the neighbourhood is alarmed, a bad example indeed for the children who are witnesses of all this.

Christians, you now expect to hear a few instructions on the manner of educating your children. In the first place, I would have you consider their education, as one of the most essential and indispensable duties of a parent. If you neglect it, you betray the cause of God, and that of religion; you risk the eternal salvation of your children, and your own. Lose no time then; for if you do, the consequences may be very serious. As soon as the glimmerings of reason begin to appear, improve to the best advantage the favourable opportunity, offer these first fruits to the Almighty, direct the first motions of their hearts to heaven; adapt your instructions to their weak capacities; let them be

often

often repeated; let the great truths of christianity sink deep into their minds, and be so firmly rooted there, that they may be their safeguard against every danger. Let it be your study to watch their rising passions, to which they may be exposed in the course of their lives, and to keep them within bounds. Be not blind to their faults; never make allowances for any thing in them, that may be displeasing to God. When you observe the seeds of anger, revenge, or other inordinate passions, to spring up in them, be sure you check the dangerous growth; act not like some foolish parents, who glory on such occasions, and say to their friend or neighbour: This boy will make a man of spirit. As you discourage evil in them, encourage what is good. Let virtue and piety appear before them in an amiable light, in their native charms; let them be convinced, that without a sense of religion they cannot be truly happy, even in this life; let the honour and glory of God, and the salvation of their souls, be the vital principles of their actions. This foundation once laid, you have every reason to hope, that the Almighty will give a blessing to your labours, and perfect the work. And you, christian parents, who are blessed with ease and fluence, be not deceived in this point. Do not imagine, that the plan of Christian education, which I have proposed to you, will disqualify your children from appearing to advantage in the world. No; it will make them real ornaments of society; it will teach them to give every one his due, to observe that degree of respect for others, which their superior rank, or situation in life may require; it will eminently qualify them for discharging those duties of society, which religion permits and authorizes. At the same time, such an education will prevent their being imposed on by the false maxims of the world, or carried away by the torrent of bad example. And can there be a greater

bleffing than this? You may reft affured, that in the eyes of any difcerning perfon, your children will never appear truly great, wife, or amiable, if the education you have given them, has not made them good Chriftians.

And now I conjure you by that tender regard which you ought to have for your own fouls, and for thofe of your children, ferioufly to reflect on what I have laid before you. The task required of you is difficult, but it is a glorious one. Confider, that you are forming true difciples of Jefus Chrift, obedient children of his Church, and heirs of his everlafting kingdom. May you faithfully acquit yourfelves of fo great and important a charge. May your children be your comfort in your old age, and when you are on the point of leaving this wretched world, may the confcioufnefs of what you have done for them, and of what they are, cheer your laft moments, and fpeak life to you in the midft of death. After having been a fource of joy and fatisfaction to you here below, may they be your companions in glory hereafter. Amen.

S E R M O N IX.

ON THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

For the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

When Jesus had lifted up his eyes, and seen, that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat. St. John vi. 5.

THE extraordinary fact related of our Saviour in this day's gospel, is a striking proof of his infinite and adorable goodness. He is followed by a great multitude, who having been witnesses of the miraculous cures he wrought, were anxious to see more wonders performed by him, and to hear from him the words of eternal life. Knowing that they had been with him a considerable time, and stood in need of their ordinary sustenance, our Saviour is touched with compassion for them, and is resolved to satisfy their wants. The Lord of heaven and earth cannot be at a loss as to the means he is to employ; but in order to sound the minds of his disciples, he asks, *Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, tells

tells him, that one of the company had five barley loaves and two fishes; adding, that this scanty allowance could not go far among so many. They sit down, to the number of five thousand, our Saviour takes the loaves in his sacred hands, gives thanks, distributes them and the fishes, when lo! by an effect of that divine Power, which created the world out of nothing, the loaves and fishes are so prodigiously multiplied, as not only to satisfy them all, but even to fill twelve baskets with the fragments that remained. Struck at this stupendous miracle, all agree in proclaiming him the great prophet that was expected, and are impatient to have him for their king. The first sentiments that arise in our minds on the present occasion are those of wonder and astonishment. It is of use to us, that the Almighty should interpose at times in an extraordinary manner, and reserve to himself certain displays of power, which are beyond the ordinary course of things. Thus, he awakes our attention, he strengthens our faith, he animates our hope; he forcibly convinces us, that he can do much more than we can comprehend. But if we seriously reflected on the manner in which he governs the universe, we would feel ourselves impressed with a lively sense of the wisdom, power, and goodness of that supreme Being, who holds in his hands the chain of all events, who makes every thing contribute to the accomplishment of his eternal and unchangeable purposes, who gives their daily food to that prodigious variety of living creatures that people the world: Does not the providential care of the living God extend to them all, the meanest as well as the greatest? Have we not then every reason to confide in his paternal goodness, and look up to him for comfort and support in those trying situations incident to human life? In vain do we pretend to withdraw ourselves from the obedience that is due to him; his will must be done,

done, and is it not much better to pay homage to it by a voluntary, than by a forced submission. By the one, we entitle ourselves to his special protection and mercy; by the other, we expose ourselves to the terrors of his wrath and justice. From this cursory view of the subject you may conclude, that it is of a practical nature, and deserves your most serious attention. I shall therefore endeavour, with the divine assistance, to lay before you in the following discourse, the necessity and advantages of an humble confidence in God: this shall be the subject of the first part. And to guard you against the dangers of false confidence or presumption, will be the subject of the second part.

O sovereign Creator and Preserver of the universe, who commands the earth to bring forth her fruits, who commands the seasons to observe a regular and uniform succession, whose Providence strongly reacheth from end to end, and sweetly disposeth all things; we are thy creatures and dependants. Thou art all powerful; and we are weakness itself. Thou art our Master, and we are thy servants; our King, and we your subjects; thou art our Father, and we your children; we must then humbly bow down to thy holy appointments; thou canst do with us whatever thou wilt, and who has a right to say to thee: Why hast thou done so? Grant us grace, O Lord, to adore the decrees of thy unerring wisdom in whatever may befall us. If thy hand, mercifully severe, should send us trials and afflictions, may we look up to thee, O Father of mercies, O God of all consolation; may an humble confidence in thee be our strength and security. We beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, whose perfect obedience to thy divine will qualified her to be the mother of thy eternal Word. We salute her in the words of the Angel, *Hail Mary.*

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THE FIRST PART.

That the Divine Providence governs the world, and superintends all human affairs, is a truth which reason demonstrates, and revelation points out. You will allow, that your warmest gratitude is due to the Almighty, when you consider the advantages you enjoy in this, and in every other respect, over the heathen world. It is true, that the belief of a providence, though absolutely rejected by some of their philosophers, obtained in general among them. At the same time, their notions of it were confined and imperfect, and led them into many errors and inconsistencies. They supposed, that fortune, which they regarded as a blind, capricious, inconstant deity, had a principal sway in the events of this life. Others of them maintained, that all things were governed by an inevitable destiny; that this was a tyrant which forced men to do whatever it pleased, and that no one could resist it. They consequently believed, that some men were necessarily and unavoidably of evil and perverse dispositions, so as not to have it in their power either to change or mend them.

Here I must observe, that many who style themselves Christians, adopt the language of heathens. If crimes be committed that are attended with public disgrace and infamy, the friends of the delinquent and perhaps the delinquent himself will say: It was so ordained, it could not be avoided; that is to say, if I have been guilty, it was my misfortune, and not my fault. What language is this from a Christian? Are we not all free agents? Are we not all accountable for our actions to the sovereign Judge? It were unjust in him to call us to an account, if we were under an absolute necessity of doing evil. Christians, you know what solid and incontestable truths divine revelation has substituted

substituted in the place of those airy and absurd systems of blind chance, and inevitable destiny. We firmly believe, that the Almighty, whose nature is infinitely beyond the reach of our comprehension, consults the good of all his creatures, and particularly of the human race, that his providential care extends even to individuals, the meanest not excepted; that what may appear to us to be merely fortuitous is under the direction of his unerring wisdom, that if he should permit evil to befall us, it is for good and wise reasons, though we may not at present comprehend them; that he makes every thing come to pass, for good to those who love him. — Christians, is not this laying a sure foundation of an humble confidence in him, of an entire submission to his holy will, of a calm acquiescence in the orders of his providence, of readiness and fortitude under all the distresses and calamities incident to our present state? Is not this our sheet anchor in the dangerous navigation of life? Thanks for ever to thee, O Father of mercies, who hast revealed to us little ones, what thou hadst concealed for ages from the great and wise ones of the world, and communicated to us so many and such glorious discoveries. O Christians, can you be insensible of the advantages you enjoy? What a source of consolation must it be to you, to reflect, that your protector is infinitely good, and therefore both able and willing to relieve you. Must it not be an additional encouragement to you, if this great and good protector has made the most gracious promises in your favour; for you know, that he will most assuredly fulfil them, if you on your part comply with the conditions required of you. In a word, there is nothing which his infinite power is not able to accomplish, nothing fit or expedient for you which his infinite goodness is not disposed to grant, and on the truth of his promise you may rely with the most absolute

lute certainty, that your confidence cannot rest on more solid grounds.

In the first place, he is infinitely powerful; man is weak, and therefore stands in need of a superior power to support his weakness. He may fancy himself to be strong, when the light of prosperity shines on him. But when the dark clouds of adversity gather over his head, when all human resources fail him, how comfortless must his situation be, if he does not look up to his God and seek comfort where it may be found. This life is a mixed state, full of uncertainty and vicissitude, we ought therefore to arm our minds against the evils that may befall us. If we depend on men like ourselves, we will build on a foundation of sand: they who may be willing to relieve us, may not have it in their power; death may tear from us those friends in whom we repose the greatest confidence. When you take a distinct view of these several particulars, you will be convinced, that your confidence in God is your only resource. What then shall we do in these trying situations, in those perplexing circumstances, in those moments of anguish, when we imagine that all is desperate? O Christians, let us look up to an all-powerful Protector; if we place our confidence in him, he will not disappoint us. He will either remove the cause of our weakness, or change our dispositions, and enable us to bear it. He can infuse sweets into the bitter cup of affliction. He can pour wine and oil into the wounds of our souls. Yes, we can do every thing in him who strengthens us. Was it not he that supported his faithful servant Job, and suffered him not to be borne down by that torrent of calamities which rushed upon him?

This holy man sees himself reduced, in a moment, from a state of plenty and affluence, to extreme want and misery; his numerous family are buried

buried under the ruins of his house, and he is covered from head to foot with an hideous leprosy, which makes him a shocking spectacle to his most intimate friends. But all these darts of affliction pierce not his heart, they are beaten back without doing him any hurt, his firm confidence in God makes him invulnerable. Accordingly, he breaks out into praise and thanksgiving: The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. We find that his confidence in God was rewarded even in this life; for we read in the sacred History, that the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before, and blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. And now, Christians, when we have such striking examples before our eyes, shall we sink under the weight of our afflictions? Shall bodily pains, the loss of temporal goods, or the death of friends cast us into despair, or make us withdraw our confidence from the Almighty? Oh no; his powerful arm is not shortened, what he has done formerly he can do now; whatever our conflicts may be, his grace can crown us with victory.

How remarkable was the interposition of divine providence in favour of the patriarch Joseph. From the vile condition of a slave, he rises to be the ruler of the land of Egypt; from the dark mansion of a prison, he is removed to the court of Pharaoh, and there honoured with every mark of distinction. He attributes his prosperity to the blessing of heaven, and gives all the glory thereof to the God of Israel. Who would have imagined, that exile, slavery, and imprisonment, would be the steps that raised him so high? In the midst of his distresses he never lost sight of his God, in him he placed his confidence, and therefore, he was not disappointed: all the faithful servants of God were remarkable for their confidence in him. In what animated language does the royal Psalmist express the

the sense he had of the power of the Almighty: The Lord is my rock and my deliverer, my strength in whom I will trust; the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear; though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Christians, how happy would we be, if these were our sentiments! In the midst of our afflictions we would enjoy that peace of mind, which the world cannot give; in the midst of tempests we would rest secure, knowing that the winds and the sea obey our God.

Now if the idea of an Almighty deliverer ought to banish our fears and apprehensions in the time of trouble, what pleasing emotions must rise in our minds, when we reflect, that he is a God infinitely great and good to us, that he is a merciful Father, that his tender mercies are over all his works. This is a truth so very obvious as to require no proof. Cast your eyes around, and see, if there be any part of the creation that does not proclaim the goodness of God. The heavenly bodies that shine with so much splendour, and roll over our heads with the strictest order and regularity, the numberless inhabitants of the air, the earth, and the sea, that minister to our use and convenience; all declare how much he has done for man. Look into yourselves, and there you will discover a world in miniature, a world of wonders: Not to speak of the admirable formation of our bodies, what noble faculties has he bestowed on our immortal souls? But when we consider the price which God has paid for them, Oh then, Christians, we are lost in the immensity of divine Love! Can any one give a stronger proof of his love for another, than to die for him? But this our God has done for us. Yes; the eternal Word came down from the throne of his heavenly Father, opened all the veins of his sacred humanity, and shed for us the last drop of his most precious blood. After all this, Christians,

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can you doubt for a moment of the goodness and mercy of God? And shall not the thought thereof raise your dejected spirits? Will you not look up to him for relief, who glories in being the comforter of the afflicted, who invites you to pour out your souls before him, and promises to hear your prayers?

Consider that the afflictions you undergo may be absolutely necessary for your salvation; if so, he can support you under them by his all powerful grace, and then you shall be content and happy. Christians, what a source of joy and satisfaction do we find in our holy religion, which dispenses hope and comfort to the afflicted, and holds out mercy and forgiveness to the penitent. This idea is conveyed to our minds in the most forcible and engaging manner. One time the Almighty is compared to a loving Father, who with open arms receives the prodigal son, embraces him, prepares an entertainment for him, and invites all his neighbours to partake of his joy. At another time he compares himself to a shepherd who goes in quest of a strayed sheep, and when he finds it, puts it on his shoulders, and brings it back to the sheepfold. To prove how just these comparisons are, and how great is his joy on the conversion of a sinner, many instances might be produced. Did not our Saviour bring salvation into the house of Zacheus the publican? When the penitent Magdalen wiped his feet with the hair of her head, and bedewed them with her tears, did he not declare, that many sins were forgiven her, because she loved much? He has shewn mercy to thousands, and the same mercy will be extended to us, if we sue for it in a proper manner. We cannot therefore imagine, that he will overlook our spiritual necessities. No; the salvation of our souls is his principal care: For this he threatens, he promises, he invites us to return to him, that we may feel all the effects of his

his paternal goodness. Have we not then every reason to place all our confidence in him, especially when we consider the gracious declarations he has made in our favour? He calls us his children; he encourages us to call him our Father; he assures us that he will never forget us. Does a mother forget the fruit of her womb, even though she should I will never forget you. Can any expressions be more endearing, more affectionate? Does he not challenge us to point out a single instance of a just man who put his trust in him, and was disappointed. In every part of holy Writ you will find these words sounding continually in your ears: Let your confidence be in the Lord, and he will not forsake you. Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee: Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. Is it not his delight to be with the children of men? Does he not sincerely wish that all be saved, and that none perish? He watches over each of us with the same care and attention as if there were no other creature in the universe. We have often experienced the effects of his paternal goodness. He has delivered us from many dangers which seemed to threaten us with destruction, he has supported us under trials, which would overpower us, were we left to ourselves. And shall not the consideration of his past mercies awake in our souls a lively confidence in him? Can we be so lost to all sense of reason and religion as to imagine, that his powerful right hand so often stretched forth to help us, is now shortened, that it cannot save? Oh no; this would be insulting his adorable providence.

If you find one man in a thousand who has a sincere friendship for you, who endeavours to convince you of it, and has already done you many services; let me suppose, that this valuable friend continues for years in the same dispositions, renews his protestations, and promises to be ever faithful

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to you, would he not be exceedingly hurt, would you not wound him in the tenderest part, if you were to express the least uneasiness in regard to his fidelity. Now if diffidence be so great an enemy to human friendship, must it not be a greater enemy to divine charity? If it be so injurious to man, who, at best is liable to inconstancy, must it not be infinitely more so to that God, who is unchangeable in his nature, whose tender mercies endure for ever?

Christians, I have endeavoured to administer comfort to you, whatever evils may befall you, whatever distresses you may labour under in this vale of tears, an humble and at the same time unshaken confidence in your God, is the best remedy I can prescribe for you. This confidence is a rational one; it is built on the most solid foundation, on the infinite power, the infinite goodness, the unquestionable veracity of an Almighty Protector. Thus the divine administration appears to us in an amiable and engaging light. We can never complain, that we are left quite solitary and forsaken, for we are under the direction of our heavenly Father, who continually watches over us. Let us therefore conduct ourselves as dutiful and obedient children. Let us faithfully acquit ourselves of the several obligations annexed to our respective stations in life, and leave the rest to God; for he will do what is right. Let us enjoy a foretaste of heaven, and behold the hand of God in every thing; let us say from the bottom of our hearts: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Such, Christians, are the advantages of an humble and firm reliance on God. But lest you should carry this virtue beyond the limits prescribed by the Almighty, and make it degenerate into a vice, I shall now endeavour to mark out these limits, and guard you against a false confidence or presumption. The subject of the second part.

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THE SECOND PART.

Christians, what I have laid before you in the first part amounts to this, that if you place your confidence in God, you may expect, that he will help and assist you in your temporal and spiritual necessities. At the same time, your own endeavours must not be wanting, it is a general law established by the Almighty in the order of nature, and in the order of grace, that we co-operate with him. We cannot therefore suppose that he will do every thing for us, while we do nothing for ourselves. No; such a supposition is highly unreasonable and criminal, as appears from the ordinary course of his providence. At his command showers descend to fertilize the earth, the sun by its vital heat enlivens nature, and ripens the grain. But will this do without the care and labour of the husbandman? Must he not improve the blessings of heaven? And suffer them not to be thrown away on him by his own indolence? Are not all the children of Adam doomed to labour, and earn their bread by the sweat of their brow? How unaccountable then is the folly of these idlers, who when poverty stares them in the face, sit with their hands across, as if providence were to do every thing for them? Do they imagine that showers of gold will fall down from heaven into their laps? Why do they not take pains to extricate themselves out of the misery they are in. But they are gentlemen, they cannot go through any drudgery, and they are ashamed to beg. But will the bare title of gentlemen keep them from starving? No; tracing genealogies and boasting of families will not put so much as a morsel of bread in their mouths. Instead of labouring for their subsistence, they are only remarking the rise of others, who without fa-

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mily, without connexions have pushed themselves
 into the world. Now, if they who are the objects
 of their censure, have advanced themselves, and
 made a fortune by just and lawful means, they are
 to be applauded, and not censured. Why should
 any one envy them the success, with which the Al-
 mighty has blessed their honest endeavours? Let
 me even suppose, that fortunes are made in ano-
 ther way, and that they are the fruits of fraud and
 injustice, are they who employ such criminal means
 not accountable to the sovereign Judge? Is it the
 business of a poor individual, whom they never
 wronged, to cite them before his tribunal, and ar-
 rogate to himself that right of judging, which the
 Lord and master of all claims as his due? Besides
 these murmurs and complaints only envenom the
 heart of affliction, and infuse poison into the
 wound. This unmeaning pride, this indolence
 has been the ruin of many families in our own
 country. It is but natural that they, who have
 mismanaged their temporal affairs should feel the
 effects of their mismanagement. It never was the
 intention of providence to encourage idleness: if
 this were the case, what would become of society?
 There would be a total stagnation in the several
 departments of life, if men were not prompted by
 their mutual wants to be useful to themselves or
 others. How many who have nothing to depend
 on but the work of their hands, spend the earn-
 ings of the week in riot and intemperance, while
 their wives and children are destitute of the com-
 mon necessities of life? And yet these are the
 men, who, if they should want employment com-
 plain most bitterly of the badness of the times and
 arraign providence, as if they were intitled to its
 choicest favours? And what is the consequence?
 By a just judgment of that providence, which they
 often insulted, they end their days in beggary and
 wretchedness. Happy, if in the evening of life
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they return to a sense of their duty, and begin with a penitential spirit the misfortunes which they brought on themselves. How foolish and presumptuous must that man be, who vainly fancies that the Almighty will do every thing for him, when he does nothing for himself, when instead of gathering with providence, he scatters and dissipates what providence puts into his hands for the necessary support of himself and his family. Therefore Christians, in your temporal necessities, first improve the blessing of Heaven, in the next place employ your own hands, talents, or industry, and then you may with some degree of reason hope for success.

Now is it not equally evident, that if we wish to be supported by the divine grace in our spiritual necessities, our own cooperation must not be wanting. To think otherwise would be to tempt the Almighty; and yet how many indulge themselves for years in their vicious habits, and swallow iniquity like water presuming on the divine mercy. Thus they insult their God instead of honouring him; they often cry out, Lord, Lord; but he declares himself, "that it is not every one who cries out, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Let them first renounce sin, and turn to God with their whole hearts, and then their confidence will rest on a solid foundation. The most essential requisite for a true confidence in him is the testimony of a good conscience: for the beloved Disciple declares, that if our hearts do not deprive us, we have confidence in God. What right then has the obstinate sinner, the faithless traitor to expect the blessings which are promised to the faithful servant? Ought he not to dread the wrath and indignation of the Almighty instead of flattering himself with the idea of his paternal goodness? He says, God is merciful, and wishes not my destruction, he will receive me with

with open arms, whenever I return to him. But that impious man does not consider, that he is multiplying his crimes by putting off his repentance to the last moment. Christians, can there be a more dangerous illusion? No; there is not a sin that plunges more souls into hell, than the sin of presumption. You see then, how opposite it is in its nature, and in its consequences to that humble confidence which entitles us to the special favour and protection of providence, to the choicest blessings of heaven. I shall now speak of another vice very different from presumption, and and yet essentially opposite to confidence; a vice, which one would think, ought not to be found among Christians. It is a restless anxiety, an excessive solicitude in regard to the evils that may possibly befall us. Now, it is clear that such a disposition cannot be justified by the principles of reason or religion. Is it reasonable for a man to deprive himself of that calmness and presence of mind, which would enable him to act in a proper manner? If he possessed his soul in peace, and did not give way to a scared imagination, he might either ward off the evil he apprehends, or bear it with firmness, if it were unavoidable. What occasion has he to ransack futurity for evils that may never overtake him? By indulging this unhappy temper he will multiply his dangers, he will add imaginary to real evils, and supply himself with a fund of uneasiness never to be exhausted. And how far will this disposition serve him as to his temporal concerns? It will only perplex and bewilder him so as to take off his attention from the present moment, and from the duties immediately required at his hands. Christians, I do not mean to condemn that forecast, which every one ought to have, nor to blame those precautions which we ought to take against the evils that threaten us. I speak of that useless anxiety which disquiets the

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mind, and is an enemy to our temporal and eternal interests. It weighs us down to the earth, and suffers us not to look up to heaven, argues a secret diffidence in the Almighty, as if he were not as ready as he is able to assist us, and shuts up the treasures of the divine grace against us.

Our Saviour condemns this excessive solicitude in the clearest and most positive terms. He shews us, that it is our duty never to lose sight of that providence, which extends its care and attention to the birds of the air, beasts of the field, and to the plants that flourish on the face of the earth. Is not the right hand of the Almighty ever open to fill all living creatures with blessings? Does he not provide for them, all that is necessary to support their being. Who has given the flowers of the field those rich, those beautiful colours with which they are so curiously adorned, that all the art of man cannot produce any thing equal to them? And now if even the inanimate parts of the creation are not beneath his notice, if he takes so much care of inferior and less noble creatures, will he neglect to take care of man who is made according to his own image and likeness, who is the heir of all his blessings, and the lord of the creation; thus, our Saviour reasons with admirable force. Attend to the manner in which he concludes his instructions on this head: Be not solicitous therefore, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.

In these last words, Christians, is comprised the substance of what has been laid before you. If you mean to be entitled to the special protection of the Almighty, and to see his gracious promises fulfilled in regard to you, you must on your part, comply with the conditions required of you. And what are these conditions? To do your duty, whatever

whatever station of life you may be in, to be faithful and obedient to your God, and ever submissive to his holy will. You must never prescribe for him how he is to dispose of you, for he knows what is to your purpose, and what is really good for you. In every undertaking endeavour to secure his blessing, then exert yourselves as far as reason and religion will allow, without anxiety, without uneasiness, and leave the issue to the supreme disposer of all events.

Let us therefore, Christians, with an humble confidence address ourselves to our God, who is both able and willing to relieve both our temporal and spiritual necessities. Let us beseech him, through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who shed his blood for us, to grant that we may conduct ourselves as dutiful and obedient children to the best and most affectionate of Fathers. May his will be ours; may we never abuse his mercies to the ruin of our souls; may we never set our hearts on the perishable goods of this life; may we never lose sight of him, who is our sovereign and everlasting good. Thus, having faithfully served him in this vale of tears, we may expect to reign with him in that glorious kingdom, where we shall have nothing to hope for, where all our past hopes shall be crowned in the enjoyment of him, who will fill the whole capacity of our souls for all eternity. Amen.

S E R M O N X.

ON THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE
ALTAR.

For Palm Sunday.

Tell ye the daughter of Sion : Behold, thy king cometh to thee, meek. These words are read in the Gospel of this day. Matt. 21. 5.

ON this day the Church presents to our view our Saviour's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, a great multitude go out to meet him with branches of palm in their hands; they strew the way with their garments; they express their joy with loud acclamations: "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." These honours were undoubtedly due to that great conqueror, who by his passion was soon to triumph over sin, death, and hell: and if we mean to enter into the spirit of the Church, we will pour out our souls in acts of thanksgiving to him, whose victories have been the source of so many blessings to us. At the same time, let us not forget that we are engaged in the same cause with him, that we are bound to subdue our spiritual enemies,

enemies, and triumph over sin. Nothing can more powerfully contribute to this desirable end, than a faithful compliance with that most solemn duty of our religion, to which the Church summons us at this holy time.

It is now she commands her pastors to invite you all in the words of my text: *Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold, thy king cometh to thee, meek.* Come then, Christians, come, and meet your Redeemer, give him your hearts and affections, embrace the means of salvation she holds forth to you, and prepare yourselves for his triumphant entrance into your souls by a worthy communion. He is not now armed with terror, as he will be on the Last day; he is full of sweetness; he endeavours to win you by all the blandishments of his love; he conjures you to draw near him, let us hear his loving invitation: "Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." He veils his glory under sensible appearances; he strips himself of his majesty to render himself more familiar; he makes use of the most admirable contrivance to communicate himself to you, to replenish your souls with his choicest blessings. Can we be insensible to so much goodness? Shall we deafen our ears, and harden our hearts against the repeated calls of our Saviour, must the thunder of an excommunication be necessary to rouse us out of our criminal indifference? It is easy to see, how far we have degenerated from the spirit of these primitive times, when the sanctity of the faithful entitled them to a daily participation of the sacred mysteries. How different is the case of many Christians now adays? They must be dragged like slaves to the altar, and if they were left to themselves, they would not think of being reconciled to their God, till approaching death would put them in mind of bidding adieu to this world, and disposing themselves for the next. Do you think that

that these involuntary victims will be pleasing in the sight of that God, who loves the cheerful giver, and requires the sacrifice of our hearts? No, he must be provoked at their ingratitude, and as they have proved themselves unworthy of his favours, they must feel his avenging wrath. It is your interest, Christians, to guard against these evils by a faithful attention to a duty, to which you are called by the voice of God and of his Church. To engage you thereto is the main purport of the following discourse. In the first part I shall endeavour, with the divine assistance, to lay before you the nature of the adorable sacrament of the altar: In the second, the dispositions required of us, that we may worthily approach it. I shall conclude with some reflections on the advantages thereof.

O great and eternal lover of mankind, who not content with having shed the last drop of thy precious blood, art pleased to be daily offered on our altars as a victim for our sins, and to nourish us with your body and blood; dispel the thick mists which our passions raise before our eyes, that we may clearly see how necessary it is for us to partake of the delicious banquet which you have prepared for the sons of men. But above all grant us these dispositions, without which this life-giving bread cannot be a bread of life to us. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, in whose chaste womb thou hast been pleased to dwell, from whom thou hast derived that sacred flesh, which thou givest for the nourishment of our souls. We beg leave to address her in the words of the Angel. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Before we proceed farther, Christians, it may not be amiss to let you know what the faith of the Church is, with regard to this adorable sacrament.

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The Church, assembled in her last general council, declares that our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, true God, and true Man, is truly, really, and substantially contained, under the outward appearances of bread and wine; that after the consecration the bread is changed into his body, and the wine into his blood. But whereas Christ is now glorious and impassible, and can die no more, wherever his body is, there his blood and his soul must also be. Again, his divinity is inseparable from his humanity from the very moment he has united these two natures in his sacred person, it follows of course, that where his soul and body are, there his divinity is also. From this plain profession of faith it is clear, that what was bread and wine before the consecration, after the consecration ceases to be bread and wine; being changed, not into a figure or representation of the body and blood of Christ, but into his real body and blood. Of the bread and wine there remain only the sensible elements or appearances. We may also observe, that this miraculous change is attributed to the words of consecration, pronounced by Christ himself when he instituted this sacrament. It is not then our faith that makes him present in the sacrament, although by faith we believe him to be there. The body, the blood, the soul, and divinity of Christ being inseparable from each other, as we have already laid down, whoever receives the body of Christ under the species or appearance of bread, must also receive his blood, his soul, and divinity: and can a person wish for more than to receive Christ whole and entire. All these consequences naturally flow from one great truth, which we are strictly bound to believe, to wit, that the body and blood of Christ are really and substantially contained in the blessed Sacrament. But that our faith may be reasonable, it is proper you should see the foundation on which it rests. The proofs
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I will produce to you shall be taken from the New Testament. I shall also lay before you some passages of the Fathers, to shew you what was the constant belief of the Church in this point.

It is related in the sixth chapter of St. John, that our Saviour, long before the institution of the blessed Sacrament, promised in the presence of a great multitude, that he would give bread for the life of the world, and that his flesh was to be that bread; the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. At this extraordinary promise, the Jews began to ask each other with amazement: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? It is clear, that they understood him in the plain literal sense, for if they imagined, that he only meant to give them bread to eat, this they might easily conceive: And if our Saviour really meant no more, why does he not clear up the difficulty, and tell them what his meaning was? On the contrary, he insists on being understood in the obvious sense of the words, when he positively asserts, that, unless they eat his flesh, and drink his blood, they shall not have life in them: Verily, Verily, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. Whosoever eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the Last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, abides in me, and I in him. Shocked at these words many of his disciples quitted him, and walked with him no more. They understood that he meant to give them his real flesh as meat, his real blood as drink; but they could not conceive how, or in what manner this could be done. But it was not their business to enquire into the manner, all they had to do, was to hear and believe: For when God reveals to us such matters as our weak understanding cannot comprehend, is it not

not reasonable that we should listen to our God, and captivate our understanding under the yoke of faith? Jesus, perceiving that many of his disciples had quitted him, turns about to the twelve whom he had chosen for his apostles, and asks them, would they also go away? Peter answers in the name of the rest: O Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life: we believe and we know that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God: That is to say, Lord, whom can we take for our Master and Teacher but you? Who can instruct us in the truths of eternal life but you? Though we do not comprehend what you say, we firmly believe that you speak the truth, because you are the Son of the living God, who cannot deceive us, or be deceived.

He thus prepared the minds of his disciples for the great gift he was to bestow on them: let us see how he has performed his promise. For the clearing up of this point, we have the authority of three Evangelists, one of whom was an eye-witness of the fact, the other two had it from those who were eye-witnesses. We have also the authority of St. Paul, who declares, that he learned it by a special revelation from Jesus Christ. The account St. Matthew gives of this remarkable transaction is as follows: Whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take you and eat, this is my body: and taking the chalice, he gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins. According to St. Mark the words made use of by our Saviour, are, This is my body, this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many. The words of the institution mentioned by St. Luke are: This is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me. This is the chalice

chalice of the New Testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you. St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, says much the same. Now, Christians, let me ask you: Could our Saviour make use of clearer terms to assure his Apostles that what he gave them was his real body and blood? Was it not his real body that was delivered to die for them on the cross? Was it not his real blood that was shed for them? It certainly was: whereas then he declared, that he gave them that very body which was delivered for them, that very blood which was shed for them. Can any one doubt of his having given them his real body and blood? Had our Saviour said: This is not my body, this is not my blood, every one would conclude, that neither his body nor his blood is contained in the Sacrament; because these words, taken in the natural obvious sense, convey no other idea. And shall not the words, This is my body, this is my blood, have equal force to prove, that his body and blood are truly contained in the Sacrament. If the words, This is not my body, this is not my blood, would give us clearly to understand that Christ was not present in the Sacrament, the words which he actually made use of: This is my body, this is my blood, give us clearly to understand that he is really present there. And, if we consider the circumstance in which he spoke, we shall find, that he had every reason to speak in a clear, intelligible manner. He speaks to his own, whom he loved to the end, whom he calls no longer servants, but friends; he pours forth his heart in sincere effusions of tenderness for them; he leaves them a lasting pledge of his love; he commands them to do the same in remembrance of him; he consequently invests them with a power to produce the same wonderful effect: a power conferred on them, not in favour of themselves only, but for the benefit of the whole Church; a

power

power not to be confined to the times in which they lived, but to continue as long as the Church would subsist, that is, to the end of the world: for, now he speaks to them no longer in parables, but unbosoms himself to them in the most familiar manner; in a word, he gives them his last will and testament, being on the point of quitting this world, and going to his heavenly Father. Is not all this enough to convince us, that what he said on such an occasion, in such circumstances, is to be understood in the plain, obvious sense of the words?

And if we consult the Fathers, we shall find, that on this point they speak conformably to what is delivered in the sacred Oracles, and in the same terms that we do now. And let me observe to you, Christians, that their authority ought to have great weight in the present case. They could not be unacquainted with the faith of the Church in their times, nor can it be supposed that they all conspired to deceive us in so essential a point. For this reason, though we allow them to be fallible men, they are unexceptionable witnesses of what the Church believed in their times with regard to the blessed Sacrament. They are all unanimous on this head; a few of them will suffice. St. Justin, Martyr, who wrote in the middle of the second century, in his apology for the Christian religion, addressed to the Emperor and Roman Senate, speaking of the blessed Eucharist, says: That the Christians did not look on it as mere bread, or mere wine, but were taught, that it was the flesh and blood of Jesus incarnate. St. Cyprian, who lived in the third century, says: The bread which our Lord gave to his disciples being changed, not in shape, but in substance, by the omnipotence of the Word, is made flesh: here you plainly see that substantial change in the matter of the Sacrament, which the Church holds to this day. St. Gregory
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of Nyssen, who lived in the fourth century, makes a profession of his faith in the following terms: We believe that the sanctified bread is transmuted or changed by the word of God, into the body of the Son of God: Now, Christians, let me ask you, what difference is there, in point of meaning, betwixt the transmutation, and that of transubstantiation, by which the Church expresses the miraculous change of the substance of the bread and wine, into the substance of the body and blood of Christ? In the same age St. Cyril of Jerusalem explains to them, in the clearest terms, the faith of the Church with regard to this Sacrament, addressing himself to persons who were not as yet baptized, who consequently were to be instructed in the plainest and most familiar manner: Since Christ says he, affirms and says of the bread: This is my body, who after that will dare to doubt of it? and since he says of the wine: This is my blood, who would dare to say: it is not his blood? He once by his will changed water into wine, and does he not deserve to be believed, when he transmuted, or changed wine into his blood? Wherefore, with a certainty excluding all manner of doubt, we take the body and blood of Christ; for, under the appearance of bread, his body is given, and his blood, under the appearance of wine. A little after, he exhorts them, not to look on this Sacrament as mere bread and wine, for it is, says he, the body and blood of Christ, according to his own words; for though the senses suggest, that it is no more than bread and wine, do not judge of it by the taste it has, but by faith; knowing and relying on it most certainly, that the bread which you see is not bread, although it taste like bread, but the body of Christ. Can any of us, Christians, speak more clearly of the blessed Sacrament, than this great saint has done so many hundred years ago? St. Ambrose, who lived at the same time, is no less clear on this

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important point. Let us hear what he says: The bread is bread before the consecration, but as soon as it is consecrated, from bread it becomes the flesh of Christ. In the fifth century, St. Chrysostom makes use of these remarkable words: Let us every where believe Almighty God, nor contradict him, though what he says seems contradictory to our reason and sense: his words cannot deceive us, our senses are easily deceived; his words never err, our senses frequently mistake. Since therefore he says, This is my body, let us be persuaded of it. O how many say, I would wish to see his face, I would wish to see his garments. Lo! you see him, you touch him, you eat him. You desire to see his garments, but he gives himself to you, not only that you may see him, but that you may touch him and possess him within you. We are nourished with that flesh, which the Angels see, and resemble: what shepherd ever fed his flock with his flesh? He nourishes us with his own body, he cements and incorporates us with himself. We shall conclude these quotations with the words of St. Hilary, who says, that we can no longer doubt of the real body and blood of Christ being in the Sacrament.

Let us now make such reflections as naturally occur from the passages just mentioned. We may observe, that the Fathers propose to themselves the same difficulties that are proposed now-a-days; they answer then precisely as we do; they say, that we are not to depend on the testimony of our senses, which so often deceive us, but on the word of God, which can never deceive. They say, that whatever our reason may tell us, whatever apparent contradiction it may discover in the mystery of the Eucharist, we ought to listen to our God, and not contradict him. Nothing, Christians, can be more reasonable than this advice. For certainly our senses were never given us as judges of matters beyond the reach of our understanding, whereas

whereas they frequently deceive us in matters which are within its compass: every one's experience will tell what mistakes they lead us into. But, thanks be to God, our faith is built on a more solid foundation, on the unerring word of Christ. It is by hearing, that we come to the knowledge of his word which is announced to us; it is by hearing, that we come to a proper knowledge of this adorable Sacrament, by listening to God who speaks to us, by making our senses and reason bend to the awful truths he is pleased to reveal to us.

With regard to the difficulties which reason may start on this occasion, we may observe, that it is vain to seek for examples in nature of that, which is beyond the natural course of natural things. The Almighty can do what we should not presume to comprehend, and reason itself, when properly directed, induces us to submit the faint glimmerings of our understanding to his eternal, infinite wisdom. Difficulties of this kind will have at least, equal force against the mystery of the Trinity and that of the Incarnation; in a word, we can have no religion when once we pretend to measure the power of God, by our weak conceptions, and to arraign before the haughty tribunal of our reason, his unsearchable ways, his incomprehensible judgments. But, is there any real contradiction in the mystery of the blessed Eucharist? No, Christians, the body of Christ does not exist in the Sacrament in the corporal, natural manner; it did, while he lived on earth; it exists there as a spiritual body; and as a spirit really exists, though it requires no extension or greatness of place for its existence, so the spiritual body of Christ really exists under the small compass of the outward forms or appearances of bread and wine. And yet, this is his true and real body, the same body that was born of a Virgin, that suffered on

the Cross, that rose from the dead, that is now in heaven; the same, I say, in substance, though not to its manner of being.

Thus far, Christians, have I endeavoured to lay before you the grounds of your belief with regard to the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is proper that you be acquainted with the principles of your holy religion; and that such of you in particular as are well informed in other matters, be able, if necessity should ever require it, to give some account of their faith. At the same time, let me enjoin you by that charity which our Saviour has displayed in favour of all mankind, to keep up in our hearts, sentiments of real affection and tenderness for those who differ from you in this, or in any other religious point. Let that bitter, misguided zeal be for ever banished, which instead of saving religion, only disgraces it. Let us shew, that we are no strangers to the spirit of Christ, to the spirit of the gospel, which is nothing else than the spirit of meekness, peace, and benevolence. If other motives were wanting, our gratitude ought to step forward on this occasion, and point out our benefactors as the objects of our love and esteem. They give us daily proofs of their good intentions, they have conferred on us unexpected favours, let us prove that we deserve them; thus may we hope to receive additional ones, when it shall seem fit to that all-wise Providence, which strongly reaches from end to end, and sweetly disposes of all things. From what has been said of the nature of this sacrament, you are convinced, that the Saviour of the world could not have left a more valuable present to his Church. Let us pour out our souls in acts of thanksgiving to him for this wonderful mention of his love. What a happiness is it for us to have our God always ready to strengthen our weakness, to comfort us during our mortal pilgrimage, to visit us when sick, to protect us at

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that time of danger, and fill us with heavenly benedictions. He gives himself to us as spiritual food to nourish our souls, and keep up in them the life of grace. By this sovereign remedy the fury of our passions is abated, as St. Bernard observes: If any one, says he, does not find so frequent, or so violent motions of anger, envy, impurity, or other passions, let him give thanks to the body and blood of our Lord; for it is the virtue of this Sacrament which produces these effects, and let him rejoice, that the worst of ulcers begin to heal. It is this blessed Sacrament that gives a right to eternal life; he that shall eat of this bread shall live for ever. It is this, that enables us to hold out in the midst of the difficulties and conflicts of this life, to persevere to the end, and secure to ourselves the crown prepared for those who fight and conquer. Let us then draw near this source of living waters, and quench therein the thirst of our souls. Our Saviour himself commands us to do so: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.

The Church has been obliged, by the degeneracy of her children, to enforce this duty by a positive precept; in consequence of which, all persons who are come to the years of discretion, are bound to make a sincere confession of their sins, at least once a year, and to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at Easter, or within the time limited for it; otherwise, they are to be excluded from the Church whilst living, and when they die, to be deprived of Christian burial. You see then, Christians, that you are strictly bound to perform this great duty. Not to communicate is a crime, to communicate unworthily is to eat and drink your own damnation; the only medium left then is, to dispose yourselves for communicating worthily.

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THE SECOND PART.

But what are the principal dispositions required of us? I shall reduce them to these three; a sincere desire of being admitted to the blessed Sacrament, purity of conscience, and love.

If our faith were such as it ought to be, there is nothing we would more earnestly wish for, than to have our Lord and Master united to us, and making up his abode among us. We are highly pleased when a person of rank and consequence shews us some marks of attention and esteem; what is this when compared to the favour which the Lord of glory does us, by descending really and substantially into our mortal bodies? And yet, Christians, the very thought of these great duties, confession and communion, casts a damp on our spirits; the short time we take to prepare ourselves hangs heavy on our hands, it is a time not of a penitential, but a worldly sadness; for it is death to us to be taken off from our ordinary pleasures and amusements, to be obliged to enter into ourselves, and to be under some restraint. Others approach the blessed Sacrament, because they must do what they see done by the rest of the faithful, otherwise, they would be taken notice of, and they observe, that their ecclesiastical superiors are in earnest with regard to their compliance. Again, there are some, who are sure to be always the last, as if they meant to convince the world, that all they want is to save their distance. Great God! what a return do we make you for the inestimable present you have been pleased to bestow on us? Christians, can it be supposed, that such persons hunger and thirst after the bread of life? Can they apply to themselves the words of the royal Psalmist; As the wearied hart panteth after the

fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after thee, O God.

The second disposition required of us is, purity of conscience. You know, that the Sacrament of the Eucharist supposes a person to be in the state of grace; this divine food is intended for the living, and not for those who are spiritually dead, it is the precious pearl of the gospel not to be cast before swine; we must then be pure, before we approach the author of all purity; for there can be no union betwixt light and darkness, betwixt God and Belial: you must then wash away the stains of your souls by penitential tears, if you mean to prepare a fit habitation for the living God. If you tell me, that you have no time for so great a work, I ask you, for what other purpose has the Church instituted these forty days of mortification and penance, but to give you an opportunity of entering into yourselves, of sanctifying your souls by the exercise of all good works, that by this means, you may be disposed to celebrate, in a proper manner, the glorious mystery of the Resurrection. But if you have not as yet thought on this important duty, I conjure you to delay no longer, the voice of the Church calls upon you; beseech the Almighty God to cleanse you from your iniquities, to clothe you with the nuptial robe of purity of heart, that you may be admitted to the feast of the spotless Lamb.

The third disposition required of us, is love. Every one will admit, that our Saviour's love for mankind shines no where more brightly than in the adorable Sacrament. Here he plainly shews, that his delight is to be with the children of men. He gives himself to be the food and nourishment of sinners. O wonderful condescension! O excess of divine charity! He comes to us, Christians, in order to draw us to himself; and shall we not receive him with gladness? Shall we not give our hearts

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hearts to him, who gives himself entirely to us? Let us invite him to our souls in the words of St. Augustine: When, O Lord, will you come, and take possession of my soul, to reign there alone, and make me forget my troubles, my misfortunes and my weaknesses, to establish there a solid peace; perhaps, O Lord, she is not sufficiently adorned to receive you, but come, you will be the only ornament; perhaps I entertain therein secret and invisible enemies, but your presence alone will put them to flight, and all will be in peace, when once you shall have taken possession. Perhaps she has stains that disfigure her in your eyes, but your adorable blood will wash them away: Come, O Lord, come without delay, we have every thing when we possess you, and in the midst of all the pleasures and enjoyments of the world, we are empty, we have nothing, when we have not you. Christians, may these be the sentiments of our hearts; whenever we approach the holy communion, may we receive all the benefits arising from it; may our blessed Saviour abide in us, and we in him; it is from him alone we can expect so great a blessing.

Grant then, O Lord, that we may rise from the death of sin to the life of grace, at the time that you rise triumphant over sin, death, and hell; that as often as we receive you under the veils of the Sacrament, we may dispose ourselves for seeing you one day face to face, in your everlasting kingdom, where you display the fullness of your glory and majesty for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N X I.

ON THE PASSION.

For Good Friday.

Every soul that is not afflicted on this day, shall perish from among the people. Book of Leviticus xxiii. 29.

WHAT means this exterior of grief in the house of God? Why are our altars in mourning? nothing heard but doleful strains, nothing seen but what is capable of filling us with an holy sadness? Ah Christians! on this day the Son of God, the eternal Wisdom of the Father expired on a cross, and poured out the last drop of his precious blood. Be not then surpris'd, if you see the Church in the deepest affliction; her spouse is no more; he has breathed out his lovely soul; the rage and malice of his enemies can go no farther. Fix your eyes on the melancholy scene that is now before you. Can you without emotion contemplate the agonies of the Lord of glory, and the death of the Author of life? At the accomplishment of this awful and important event, nature felt the pangs of grief, and shall we remain insensible,

gible, we, who were the objects of this mystery of love, we, for whom Jesus shed his adorable blood? No: we will join in the universal sorrow; we will sympathize with our suffering Redeemer, and pay him the tribute of our tears, who has laid down his life for us. If any one can be so hard hearted as not to enter into these sentiments, let him dread the punishment denounced against the Jews on their solemn day of atonement for sin: *Every soul that is not afflicted on this day shall perish from among the people.* It is easy to perceive, that you are affected at the sight of your crucified Jesus, the devotion painted on your countenances is a proof of it; as obedient children of the Church you are animated with her spirit; when she rejoices, you rejoice, when she weeps, you weep along with her. But let us take care, that this devotion be not the devotion of a day; let us never forget the goodness and mercy of him, who for us men and for our salvation humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross. Jesus bleeds for our sins; let our hearts bleed for them; let us be crucified with him in penitential anguish; let these impressions be lasting, and continue with us to the end of our lives. To wash away your sins by penitential tears is the advice I have to give you: It is that of our Saviour sinking under the weight of the cross, and covered over with wounds: "Weep not over me, but weep for yourselves." Weep then, sinners, for that which caused the heavens to weep. What was it that armed the divine Justice against the spotless Lamb? Tell me, was it not sin? Are you not then resolved from this very moment to detest sin, and wage an eternal war against it? This is the way to sanctify your tears, and make them salutary to your souls. To what purpose is it to count over your Saviour's wounds, and indulge mere natural sensibility which you often mistake for a motive of grace, if you open his wounds afresh,

afresh, if you act over again the same part which the Jews did, and crucify the Son of Man by your disorderly lives? You have often assisted at this mournful solemnity; you have celebrated the doleful mystery of the Man God offering himself a victim for the sins of the world: And can you say, that this has wrought any change in your conduct? That your devotion on this day may be solid and effectual, I shall speak to your reason as well as to your feelings, that while you take a view of the sufferings of Jesus, and give up your hearts to the salutary impressions made upon them, you may open the eyes of your understanding to receive the rays of heavenly wisdom.

I shall therefore endeavour with the Divine assistance, to lay before you in the following discourse, the most striking scenes of this doleful tragedy, and to draw from them such moral reflections as may have an influence on your conduct. This is what you naturally expect on the present occasion. That you may be enabled to follow me with ease, I shall propose to your consideration three distinct stages of your Saviour's passion. The first, his sufferings in the garden; the second, the treatment he receives at the different tribunals; the third and last, his death on mount Calvary. O Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the World, O Jesus bleeding on a cross, which we revere particularly on this day, as the instrument of thy sufferings and of our redemption, grant, that thy precious blood be not spilt in vain for us. May it cry to heaven for mercy, and powerfully plead our cause. May its salutary streams wash away our offences, and make us white as snow. Thou couldst not give a stronger proof of thy love for man, than to die for him. May we in return consecrate our lives to thy holy service: May we die to sin, and crucify the flesh and the concupiscence thereof. May the great truths, which thou
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deliverest on this day from the pulpit of the cross, enlighten our minds, purify our hearts, and be to us a source of life. O Saviour, we humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, whose soul was pierced with a sword of grief while she beheld her expiring Son. We salute her in the words of the Angel; *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Knowing that the time was come, when he was to be given up into the hands of sinners, our blessed Saviour retires to the garden of Gethsemani, accompanied by three of his disciples. Here he sees at one view the several stages of his doleful passion, he sees scourges, thorns, nails, hammers, spears and lances, rising in painful prospect before him; he sees the blindness and ingratitude of many, to whom all his sufferings were to be fruitless and unprofitable. The sins of mankind from the beginning to the end of time; all the crimes that have ever defiled the face of the earth, the many disorders of the pagan world, their false divinities, their monstrous vices, the disorders of his own chosen people, who honoured God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him, the disorders of many among ourselves, who are Christians in name only, and heathens in their conduct; that spirit of religion which seems to threaten an utter extinction of the light of faith, those dangerous maxims so artfully propagated by the apostles of infidelity, and so greedily swallowed by the men of the world. The principles of obedience and subordination, the firmest supports of the altar and the throne, now exchanged for the specious doctrine of the imaginary rights of man, rights misunderstood, rights misapplied, rights productive of the greatest wrongs, rights marked in their progress by injustice,

tice, rapine, sacrilege, murder, impiety, anarchy and licentiousness, and by all the evils with which hell let loose upon earth could blast the peace and happiness of man. These and a thousand other errors so much in vogue at this particular period of time, distinguished by the appellation of the *enlightened age*, are all before him at once; he who in innocence and sanctity itself is shocked at this black catalogue of iniquity, which he is now to atone for to his heavenly Father; his human nature receives a violent assault, and pours out her feelings in streams of blood.

You see, Christians, what an impression your sins make on your Redeemer. They force his blood to run trickling down from every pore, and they cannot draw a single tear from you: He is sorrowful even unto death; but your hearts fraught with sin are quite at ease; he remains motionless on the ground through excess of affliction; and you sin on with an air of confidence and security; and the malice and enormity of sin are perfectly known to him, and you consider crimes of a grievous nature as pardonable weaknesses. Look then on this Man God in a sea of tribulation for the sins of others, and then you may be able to form an idea of what sin is. O Father of mercies, with what rigour dost thou punish thy beloved Son for the crimes and prevarications of the rebellious slave. O Christians, if you mean to be true penitents, arm yourselves with an holy severity; let your sorrow for sin bear some resemblance to the anguish of your bleeding Jesus, look on him bowing down his sacred head, and sinking under the weight of your iniquities, and learn to repent. Now we may call him a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief; he is abandoned by the world, and not one of his disciples comes up to comfort him, in vain he conjures them to join him in watching and prayer, he finds them fast asleep. Christians, you know

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how pleasing it is for a man in affliction to unbo-
som himself to his friend, who will share in his
grief, and administer comfort to him: This light-
ens the burden, and eases the pain of the sufferer.
On the other hand, how distressing is it not to
have a single person to befriend us, to be forlorn
and cast off by all? You are exceedingly hurt,
your sensibility is wound up to the highest pitch;
when they on whom you had conferred many fa-
vours take no notice of you, the least coolness, the
least want of attention is enough to raise a storm
in your breast. Judge then, what your Saviour
must have felt, when left to himself in this mortal
gony, neglected by his chosen friends, and over-
whelmed with unutterable grief. You will ask me,
how is it possible, that the Lord of heaven and
earth could be reduced to this extremity? He is
true man, he is therefore susceptible of the disa-
greeable impressions of pain, grief, fear and the
other guiltless passions of human nature. He
might, if he pleased, from the superior part of his
soul, which enjoyed the beatific vision have poured
a tide of glory on every faculty thereof, and with
the light of heavenly consolation have dispersed
the gloom which sat thick and heavy on the inferi-
or part. But he suspends the influence of this
glorious vision, he gives loose reins to every thing
that could torment him as man. Now we may ac-
count for those conditional desires and imperfect
wishes formed by the first feelings, those expres-
sions dictated by flesh and blood: Father, if it be
possible, let this chalice pass from me. But he
puts an end to this painful conflict in a manner
worthy of himself: Father, not my will, but
thine be done.

Here, Christians, your Saviour suffers for your
instruction; he shews you what your weakness is
able to, when afflictions rush in upon you. He
also points out the remedy. Be not discouraged
when

when a severe and unexpected trial awakes your sensibility, and fills your hearts for a time with grief and anguish. You must not, like haughty Stoics, pretend to divest yourselves of human nature, and to be insensible to every thing. No; God does not require impossibilities, nor would such a foolish parade of self-sufficient pride ever agree with the humility of the Gospel. But whatever your afflictions may be, let religion step in to your aid, hear, oh hear her gentle voice whispering peace to your soul; look up to the Father of mercies, to the God of all consolation, and conclude with your blessed Saviour: Father, not my will, but thine be done. Such are the instructions conveyed to us by the agony of our Saviour, which vented itself in tears of blood. This is a prelude to another severe trial, the treachery and infidelity of a false friend.

Now the power of darkness is to prevail, when behold, a band of armed ruffians come to seize upon him, who could command legions of angels to defend him. Observe, Christians, the wonderful calmness and intrepidity with which your blessed Saviour accosts them. He asks them, whom did they seek? They answer: Jesus of Nazareth. At once he lays his enemies prostrate at his feet by pronouncing these few words. I am he. Judge then, how the sinner must be confounded, when the Son of God, on the day of his triumph and of the full manifestation of his power, shall pronounce the same words against him: I am he, whom you have so often insulted, whom you have crucified afresh, whose blood you have trampled under foot. Having given them this striking proof of his divinity, and convinced them, that it was in his power to baffle all their attempts against him, he suffers them to rise. But who is the first that dares to seize him? Can we believe it? A disciple brought up in the school of Jesus Christ, a witness of his

miracles,

miracles, a teacher of his doctrine, a companion, a bosom friend. O unparalleled ingratitude! If any one totally unacquainted with our Saviour, with his life, with the heavenly truths he preached, had behaved in this manner, there might be some excuse for him, but when a man, in whom he reposed his confidence, who was destined to be a pillar of his Church, and a light of the world, sells the author of life for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. What can we think? O Judas, was this the return thou hadst to make to thy loving Master for the excess of his goodness to thee? Was the Redeemer of the world worth no more than thirty pieces of silver? Could so paltry a bribe tempt thee to betray thy Lord with a kiss of peace, and change the pledge of friendship and affection into a signal of the basest perfidy. O cursed avarice, how dost thou blunt the feelings of charity and humanity, how dost thou blind the understandings of thy deluded slaves. Christians, you are fired with indignation against the traitor Judas but have you no share in his guilt? Many on the approaching solemnity will be admitted to the feast of the spotless lamb; but will they all be adorned with the nuptial robe of charity? Will they put off the old man and put on the new? Will there be no Judas among them? It is to be feared that some will go through this solemn duty of religion to save appearances, to avoid being taken notice of in a disagreeable light, and to do what they see done by the rest of the faithful at this holy time, while their hearts may be filled with envy, rancour and malice against their neighbour, with a spirit of pride and revenge, with impure desires; and surely such a heart cannot be a proper place for a God to dwell in. Thus, they imitate the treachery of Judas, and betray the Son of man with a kiss of peace: Thus given up by a faithless disciple into the hands of his bitterest enemies,

mies, we may easily conceive, that he suffered from them every species of indignity, which their diabolical rage and malice could suggest. Let us now accompany him to the different tribunals, and take notice of the treatment he there receives. This is the second stage of your Saviour's passion, and the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

Now, Christians, you are to contemplate the public sufferings of your Redeemer: You shall see the Lord of glory loaded with disgrace and infamy, a victim to the injustice of his judges, to the gross calumnies of his accusers, to the bitter invectives and cruel insults of his merciless enemies. He is dragged to the house of the high priest, like a common malefactor. Here the teachers of the law and the elders of the people are seated in council, predetermined to condemn the judge of the living and the dead. But what were his crimes? The splendour of his miracles, the purity of his doctrine, his extraordinary reputation, which seemed to eclipse their own. This is enough to make them find him guilty. They cannot bear that any one should have more credit or influence with the people than themselves. To put him to death is their object; provided they accomplish it, they are indifferent as to the means. Accordingly no legal formality is observed, not even the shadow of equity appears; passion, and not reason, is their counsellor, false witnesses are suborned, groundless and contradictory charges are made, and calumny is admitted in the place of truth. In the mean time Jesus is silent. Christians, how eloquent is this silence! How sublime the maxims it inculcates! When your character is attacked, when you are traduced as a man not to be depended on; when the tongue of slander and detraction darts its poi-

son at you, what does passion say to you? Vindicate your character, expose the falsehood of the charges brought against you, and be sure, you make the aggressors feel the full weight of your vengeance. But pray, is your reputation more valuable than that of Jesus Christ? Are you more foully traduced than he was? Can you expect to be spared, when he was so grossly attacked? Can the disciple expect to meet with better treatment than the master? I know that there are cases, when a man is obliged to answer in his own defence; but then let necessity alone, and a view to the greater good, prescribe to him the measures he is to take. But let us hear the sentence of this iniquitous tribunal. The high priest conjures our Saviour, in the name of the living God, to declare, if he be the Christ the Son of God? Our Saviour respecting the adorable name of his Father, even in the mouth of his wicked minister, declares that he is. The high priest is seized with indignation, he rends his garments, and cries out: He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses, now you have heard the blasphemy, what think you? They are all unanimous, they pronounce sentence of condemnation, he is deserving of death. At once they buffet and spit on him, they strike that face, before which the heavens tremble. Fire come down from heaven; ye Angels come in to his assistance; open up, thou earth, and punish this horrid crime! Oza touches the ark, and he is punished with death; the Bethsamites are curious to look into it, and they are struck with a general desolation; Jeroboam stretches forth his hand to threaten a prophet, and his hand is withered; and Jesus Christ, the God of the prophets, is insulted with impunity. But he requires no satisfaction, he replies with his ordinary meekness, to a vile slave who had struck him: If I have spoken ill, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why do you strike me? O you, that

that are full of the maxims of the world, you that cannot bear an affront, and think that it ought never to be pardoned, look on your insulted Saviour, and consider how different your maxims are from those which he recommends to you. The King of kings, and Lord of all, patiently bears the severest treatment from worms of the earth, and you are not satisfied, if you do not wash away your pretended disgrace in the blood of your fellow-creature. Oh, will you not spare him, for whom a God has died? To what part of his body will you direct the mortal blow, that is not covered with the blood of Jesus Christ? But your honour is concerned; and pray, must your honour stand in competition with the honour of your God, and be preferred before it? You are resolved then, to model yourselves on the world, and not on the Gospel, that is to say, you are resolved not to be Christians. In order to avoid the laughter of fools, you expose yourselves to die by the sword of pride and wrath, and in contention with your brother, and force yourselves into the presence of an angry God; a God who has suffered the greatest indignities for your sake, and whose example ought to kill in your souls all inclinations to revenge.

Condemned by the high priest and elders, our Saviour is hurried away to the civil tribunal, by a rabble who demand with loud cries the execution of the sentence. Pilate sends him to Herod, who is overjoyed at seeing him, because he had heard many wonderful things of him; and is now in hopes of seeing something extraordinary performed by him. But Jesus does not wish to gratify this idle curiosity, he works no miracle, he makes no reply to the several questions put to him. Accordingly, he receives the treatment that might naturally be expected from an impious king, and an impious court. Herod sports with the meekness and apparent meanness of the Man God, exposes

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him to the wanton railleries of his courtiers, and sends him back to Pilate, clothed in a white garment, the mark of his contempt. O ye Cherubims, behold the eternal Wisdom of God in a fool's coat, and adore your Lord in this livery of scorn: Join, Christians, in this act of adoration. If you see your Saviour despised, and the most abject of men, it is all on your account: You must, no doubt, be shocked at the manner in which Herod treats the Lord of glory. But do you not observe, that his example is followed to this very day, by many of the great ones of the world, who style themselves Christians? One would imagine, that they looked on religion as an amusement, which serves to pass away time, and not as an object that deserves their most serious attention. A man adorned with all the gospel virtues will appear contemptible in their eyes, whilst a fashionable man, who indulges himself in what they call fashionable vices, will be highly carested by them; they condemn what the gospel approves, and approve what the gospel condemns, and they treat the ministers of Jesus Christ with the same scorn and contempt, with which Jesus Christ himself was treated by the impious Herod.

In the ludicrous dress already described to you, the Saviour of the world is dragged before the tribunal of Pilate: This magistrate is too clear-sighted, not to discern the truth from the misrepresentations of envy, and the clamours of an enraged populace; he declares, that he discovers no guilt in Jesus. He is willing to save the innocent: at the same time he would wish not to displease the Jews, who are resolved on spilling his blood: he is wavering between his conscience and his worldly interest. At length he bethinks himself of an expedient, which he imagines will be effectual. A prisoner was to be released on the great solemnity of the Passover, and Pilate puts to them

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the question between Jesus, and a notorious malefactor, which of them should be released. They answer with one voice: Release unto us Barabbas. Be astonished, O ye heavens, a robber and a murderer is preferred before innocence itself. What a sudden change in a people, who a few days before honoured his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and hailed him with loud acclamations: Hosannah to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Christians, you see how little you can depend on the esteem of men, on the judgments they form of your merit, which are as unsettled as themselves. To-day they may be your friends, to-morrow your enemies; to-day they may load you with blessings, to-morrow with maledictions: endeavour then to secure the esteem of that all-seeing God, whose judgments are unerring, and will be always favourable, if you remain inviolably attached to his holy service. You are at a loss to conceive, how this deluded multitude could carry their extravagance so far as to prefer Barabbas before Jesus. And yet this is what you yourselves are guilty of almost every day of your lives. When your passions and worldly interests interfere with your duty to God; do you not gratify your passions against the dictates of reason and religion? Do you not make your conscience bend to your worldly interest? Thus you sacrifice your God to a vile pleasure, you forfeit the eternal rewards of heaven for some transitory advantages in this life, you chose Barabbas and abandon Jesus.

Pilate, finding that his first attempt was unsuccessful, orders our Saviour to be scourged, in hopes that this ignominious punishment would satisfy the malice of the Jews, soften their hearts, and dispose them to spare his life. At once these cruel orders are obeyed; a band of ruffians lay hold on the Lord of glory, they strip him naked, and tie him to a pillar: merciless executioners tear and mangle
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that virgin body which was formed by the Holy Ghost, nor do they give over, till weariness gets the better of their fury. And now the blood runs down in streams from head to foot, he is but one wound, there is no beauty nor comeliness in him, he scarce retains the figure of a man. But this is not enough, insult must be added to cruelty; they take him down, they pay him the mock honours of royalty, crown him with thorns, put a reed into his hands, and bow down before him, saluting him in derision: Hail King of the Jews. O ye holy Patriarchs and Prophets, is this he whom you so ardently desired to behold? Is this the promised deliverer, the desired of nations, the hope of the just, the glory of Israel, the light and salvation of the world? Do you know him now covered over with wounds and blood, and under all these badges of contempt? In this situation the Saviour of the world is produced before the people. Behold the man, says Pilate, vainly thinking that so affecting sight would serve to allay their fury. But all to no purpose, they demand his death with loud cries, away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him. Behold then, Christians, this man of sorrows, and see what a load of woe and misery our sins have brought upon him. If he, who could not contract the least stain of sin suffers so much for your offences, what ought you sinners not to suffer? You see your Saviour bleeding for you, and can you pretend to indulge yourselves in luxury and ease? Can you refuse submitting to the light mortifications that fall to your lot. Suffering members become a suffering head, and you must suffer with Christ, if you mean to share in his glory. Thus you will apply to your souls the merits of his sufferings, and make him a suitable return for that boundless charity, which induced him to come down from his heavenly throne, and expire on a cross. This he accomplishes on

mount Calvary, where he completes the great work of man's redemption. This is the third and last stage of your Saviour's passion and the subject of

THE THIRD PART.

Represent to yourselves, Christians, your Redeemer like another Isaac, carrying on his shoulder the wood on which he is to be sacrificed: He is weak and exhausted as to sink under the weight of the cross, his steps are marked by his blood, he painfully drags on the poor remains of a body torn and mangled at the pillar. Preceded by an herald who proclaims the sentence, surrounded by soldiers who load him with insults, followed by an enraged populace, who are spirited up to vomit a thousand blasphemies and imprecations against him, he is led like a lamb to the slaughter, not opening his mouth. Accompany him, Christians, in this mournful procession, let your imaginations paint to you all the disgrace and infamy, that could fall on the head of the vilest criminal, of the most notorious malefactor; all this your Saviour's love for you has brought upon him. Thus, the Lord of glory passes through the streets of Jerusalem, consecrating his sufferings in his own adorable person, and raising them to a divine and immortal value, for the benefit of his elect. He redoubles his efforts to proceed on his painful journey, when, behold! borne down by the weight of the cross he falls prostrate on the ground. His bitter enemies, not out of compassion, but from an apprehension that he may expire before the execution of the sentence, employ Simon the Cyrenean to assist him. You would wish, Christians, to relieve your Saviour at this extremity: If your wishes be sincere, shake off that load of sin which oppresses you, a load more insupportable to him, than all his torments. Bear with cheerfulness and resolution that portion

of the cross, which he in his mercy has appointed for you, convinced, that you must take up your cross and follow him, if you mean to be his disciple. The deplorable situation he is in, draws tears of compassion from the daughters of Jerusalem, and he in the midst of his distresses desires them not to weep for him, but to weep for themselves; he foretells the calamities that were to befall their ungrateful city, and seems to be more affected by them, than by the agonies he endures.

He arrives at mount Calvary the place marked out by the eternal decrees for the consummation of his bloody sacrifice. At length he is laid on the cross that bed of sorrows: But what barbarous preparations are made for this tragedy of woe? His garments are torn from him, which cleaved to his wounds, all his pains are encreased, his hands and feet are bored with sharp nails, and drawn with violence to the places allotted them, the thorns are fixed deep in his tender temples, his nerves are racked, his bones dislocated, he is bathed in blood, he smarts and agonizes at every pore. He is then lifted up a spectacle of shame and confusion to men and angels; his body is suspended between heaven and earth having no other support but the nails in his hands and feet. In this situation he remains whole hours, every moment of which redoubles his torments. Now we may apply to him the words of the Prophet: O ye all that pass by the way, attend, and see, if there be sorrow like unto mine. Is this the treatment, which the Lord of the universe had a right to expect from his chosen people? Let us hear the charges, which the Church in the person of her spouse makes against this headstrong and ungrateful race: My people, what have I done to you, or wherein have I made you sad? Answer me. What should I have done for you, that I have not done? For you I struck Egypt and her first born, and you tore my body

body with scourges. I opened you a passage through the Red Sea, and you opened my side with a spear. I conducted you through the desert for forty years, I fed you with manna, I made water gush out of a rock to quench your thirst, and you gave me gall and vinegar to drink. I gave you a royal sceptre, and you gave me a crown of thorns. I raised you to power and glory among nations, and you raised up your Saviour on the gibbet of the Cross. Christians, with what force shall not these charges come home against us, if we crucify the Son of Man anew by our unchristian lives? How odious must our ingratitude appear to our God, who has crowned us with so many signal blessings? He has imparted to us the knowledge of the sublimest truths, he has laid down for us a perfect system of morality, which bears in indelible characters the stamp of its divine Author: he has given us not a law of terror but a law of love, he gives us not manna, but his own adorable body and blood to be the nourishment of our souls, and to be a pledge even to our mortal bodies of a glorious immortality. But if after having done so much for us, he finds that we do nothing for him; that, on the contrary, we repeatedly rebel against him, and by our impiety dash back his choicest favours in the face of heaven, oh, who shall screen us from his justice, or assuage his avenging wrath? Can we wish for a more favourable time than the present to deprecate his vengeance, when we behold him stretching out his arms to receive us, and offering himself to his heavenly Father as a pure and spotless victim to cleanse us from all our iniquities?

He is now in bitter agonies, every thing contributes to make his torments more insupportable. He sees his blessed Mother overwhelmed with grief, which words cannot express; he sees a confused multitude testifying their barbarous joy at his shameful

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shameful death, he hears their bitter reproaches: He saved others, he cannot save himself; if he be the Son of God, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. If he desires to assuage his thirst, gall and vinegar are given him to drink. If he looks up to heaven for comfort, heaven itself seems to abandon him. But neither the malice and scorn of his crucifiers, nor the violence of his pains, can make him forget his love and tenderness for them. He pleads their cause with his latest breath, excuses their weakness, and begs for their pardon: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And now the strong ang of death are on him, the term of his ministry is expired, the justice of his heavenly Father is perfectly satisfied, when the Redeemer of the world seeing that his love for man can go no farther, declares, that all is accomplished. He inclines his head to his sacred bosom, his strength fails, his heart breaks, he groans, he expires. The sun withdraws his rays, and leaves the world in darkness, the earth trembles, the temple rends, the rocks burst, the dead arise, and all nature in convulsive agonies, sympathizes with her Creator. At the sight of these prodigies many of the Jews are seized with terror, they return home striking their breasts, and declaring, that he, whom they crucified, was the Son of God. Christians, shall we be more insensible than the Jews? Shall we not take the proper notice of the torments our Saviour underwent, and of his love for us, which brought them all upon him? Shall we not attend to the lessons this divine sufferer teaches us from the cross?

When you see the Creator of heaven and earth hanging between two thieves, and in this state of shame and disgrace exposed to the view of an innumerable multitude, assembled from all parts to the great solemnity of the Passover, when you see him

him insulted and debased so far, as to become a worm, and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people, can you, dust and ashes, pretend to domineer over your fellow-creatures, as if your birth, rank and fortune gave you a full right to treat them with haughtiness and insolence? Stoop, then, vile worm of the earth, and learn of him, who is meek and humble of heart, different maxims from those which your pride and self-love would recommend to you. Can you, a disciple of a God who sought after nothing but humiliations, whose life was one continued series of them, whose death on the cross was so ignominious as to become a stumbling block to the Jews, and by the Gentiles to be treated as a piece of folly, can you, convinced of all this, be ever aspiring after that vain and transitory greatness which the world holds out to you. Will you in the pursuit of shadows, run the risk of forfeiting the solid and substantial happiness purchased for you at the price of his blood? Can you in opposition to the glorious example set before you, entertain those enmities and animosities, which though they do not proceed to blood, extinguish charity in the soul? Will you say, that you cannot think of being reconciled to your offending neighbour? This indeed is the language of flesh and blood, but is it the language of a Christian? You know, that your holy religion obliges you to love your very enemies; and this love of your enemies, this charity, is the life and soul of Christianity. Accordingly your blessed Saviour insists on it in the strongest terms: I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. And has he not a good right to give us this command, he who suffered so much for us without murmur, without complaint; he, whose last sigh was a sigh of love and mercy; he, who on the cross, at a time when his persecutors were cruelly insulting him in the midst of his torments, prayed

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to his heavenly Father in their behalf: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

After this, Christians, can you hold out any longer? No; you will be immediately reconciled to your offending brother, you will give him your friendship, and bury your resentment in the grave of Jesus. If you find that you are addicted to any of those practices which the gospel condemns, particularly, if you give scandal to the neighbour by any public disorders, and dishonour your holy religion by a shameful neglect of its essential duties, take notice of the advice, which your Saviour gives on this day to the daughters of Jerusalem: Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves. Oh, will you not listen to the voice of him, who bled to death for the love of you? Will you insult him on this day of his bitter sorrows, by hardening your hearts against his holy inspirations? Weep then, sinners, for you stand in need of a sea of tears to bewail your sinful lives, and with your tears give him your hearts, this is the return your loving and dying Lord requires of you. It is true, he has died a most ignominious death, which justly challenges our tears, but by his death he has triumphed over sin and hell, and when will you triumph over them? When will you break the bonds of iniquity, by which you are held so fast? Will you at this holy time, rise from the grave of sin? Will your spiritual resurrection resemble the glorious resurrection of Christ, who once risen from the dead dies no more.

This is what ought to engage your attention on this solemn day of atonement for the sins of the world. Let us then, at the foot of the cross, consider what share our iniquities have had in the sufferings of Jesus; let us hide ourselves in his sacred wounds, and make him our sincere professions of fidelity and attachment. O merciful Saviour, may we never forget thy love for us, and the great price

price thou hast paid to redeem us, may we never take part with thy crucifiers, by persisting in those crimes which brought death upon thee. Thou knowest, O Lord, that we are poor and wretched creatures, we can do nothing of ourselves, our strength is from thee. Thou hast done so much for us, that we cannot but place all our confidence in thee. We are sinners, but it was to save sinners thou camest into the world. Thou hast said, that when thou wouldst be lifted up from the earth, thou wouldst draw all things after thee. Draw us then after thee, O Lord, that we may rise from the death of sin to the life of grace, from the life of grace to the life of glory, which thou hast purchased for us by thy sufferings. Amen.

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S E R M O N X I I .

ON THE RESURRECTION.

For Easter Sunday.

He is risen, he is not here. Mark xvi. 6.

ON this day which the Lord has made, the Church invites all her children to celebrate the triumph of their Redeemer, and make these places consecrated to his worship resound with their joyful alleluiahs. We have seen her overwhelmed with grief, drowned in tears, and inconsolable for the death of her spouse ; but now she casts off all marks of sadness ; dries up her tears ; puts on her most splendid ornaments, and commands us all to exult and rejoice. Can any one be so insensible as not to indulge the pleasing devotion, which this great solemnity inspires ? If the victories of earthly princes though purchased by the blood of thousands, fill the hearts of their subjects with joy and gladness, what ought our transports to be on the victory of our Lord and Saviour, a victory purchased by his own most precious blood, a victory by which he opens to us all the gates of eternal life. Rejoice then, Christians, rejoice and bless the

the day of your deliverance. Does not the captive rejoice, when his chains are broken, when he is restored to perfect liberty? Delivered from the tyranny of Satan, reinstated in the privileges you had forfeited, having now free access to that heavenly kingdom which had been shut against you, will you not vent your souls in rapturous effusions of gratitude and devotion? Oh what a subject of joy to the Christian world! Angels were the first Evangelists of the birth of Jesus, Angels are the first Evangelists of his resurrection. Behold, the happy tidings are proclaimed in these few, but comprehensive words: He is risen, he is not here. How different is the account given of our Redeemer, from that which we have of the great ones of the earth, when laid in the common dust? On those very tombs, which pride and vanity take so much pains to decorate, we read every day, this doleful inscription: Here lies the king, the statesman, the general; here he lies, and behold! after all his pomp, he is the food of worms. But death, that king of terrors, that inflexible tyrant, who rules over mankind with an absolute sway, has no dominion over the Author of life; Jesus springs triumphant from the grave, and where all human greatness is confounded and reduced to nothing, there he displays his power and glory: For us Christians he died, for us he rises from the dead. By this extraordinary miracle he strengthens our faith, he animates our hope, he finally accomplishes the work of our redemption. The body of Christ, now glorious and immortal, shews us what we may expect for these perishable bodies of ours, provided we correspond with the views of our merciful God, who earnestly wishes the salvation of us all.

O Source of life, thou hast sown the seeds of immortality in the graves of the faithful, who while they were in this vale of tears took care to walk with thee in the newness of life, and dispose them-

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selves for a glorious resurrection! Shall the false charms of this wretched world make us lose sight of our lasting inheritance? Oh no; we shall look beyond the grave, and, where our treasure is, there our hearts shall be. From what has been said, Christians, you may infer, that the resurrection of Christ is one of those grand and sublime truths, which elevate the mind, and improve the heart. Keeping these two objects in view, I shall endeavour, with the divine assistance, to lay before you in the following discourse, the importance of the fact itself, and deduce from it such moral reflections, as may have an influence on your conduct. The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith and of our hope, this shall be the subject of the first part: Our spiritual resurrection must be modelled on the resurrection of Christ, if we mean to rise glorious and immortal with him: subject of the second.

O illustrious Conqueror of sin, death, and hell, look down on us poor mortals, struggling with difficulties in this vale of tears; enable us to bear up against them by giving us a proper idea of the victory thou hast gained, and of that state of never-ending bliss, to which happy resurrection thou hast maintained our title by rising gloriously on this day. May our hearts be transported with gratitude, and with an ardent desire of sharing in thy glory; may we die to sin, and renounce every thing that renders us unworthy of celebrating thy praises. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, whose soul overflowed with a pure and heavenly joy, when she beheld the triumph of her Son. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

I know, Christians, you are fully convinced, that the Saviour of the world rose from the dead, and thus proclaimed his divinity to the world. Yes, your God has revealed this fundamental truth, which the Church proposes to your belief; it is one of the articles of your creed. It is therefore necessary, that you form a proper idea of the importance of this great truth. How essentially the resurrection of Christ is connected with the whole system of the Christian religion, appears from the manner in which our blessed Saviour and his Apostles insist on this remarkable fact. Our Saviour, when called upon by the Jews to work a miracle in order to prove his divinity, complains of the incredulity of that perverse generation, and declares, that he will give them no other sign, but that of the prophet Jonas. At the same time he explains the figure, and says, that, as the prophet Jonas was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the bosom of the earth. In another place, he speaks of a temple which the Jews were to destroy, and promises to rebuild it in three days. Here the Evangelist observes, that by this temple he meant his body, and that, when he was risen from the dead, his disciples recollecting what he had said, believed in his words, and in the prophecies which regarded this glorious event. A few days before his passion, he foretells the ignominious death he was to suffer; but he immediately adds, that he would rise on the third day.

Whoever reads the Evangelists must allow, that our Saviour had many other miracles to produce in favour of his divinity. Did he not in his own name, and by virtue of his own authority, com-

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mand the lame to walk, the blind to see, and the dead to rise? Yes; but the power of working these miracles might be communicated to mere men, who accordingly exercised it when commissioned by heaven. Thus we read that the prophet Elifeus, by his breath, reanimated the lifeless corpse of the son of the Sunamite; that by the prayers of the prophet Elias, the dead child of the widow of Sarepta was restored alive to his disconsolate mother; not to mention many other instances, which occur in the sacred Writings. But was it ever heard before, that any one raised himself from the grave? This is an operation of the divine Power which cannot be communicated to any mere creature. No; none but Jesus could say of himself, that he had power to lay down his life, that he had power to take it up again, that he was free among the dead, that he entered the dominion of death not a captive, but a conqueror, not a subject, but sovereign. Accordingly, we find, that he insists in a particular manner on the resurrection; that he gives it to the Jews as a distinctive mark of his divinity, as a rule, by which they were to judge of the truth of his holy religion.

This is the idea which St. Paul gives us of the resurrection, when he says; that if Christ be not risen, the preaching of his ministers, and the faith of his people are a mere illusion. We believe in God, who having died for our sins rose from the dead; in a God, who repeatedly declared, that he would rise. If he be not risen according to his promise, then it follows of course, that all the prophecies which announce his resurrection, and his own declarations to this purpose, are entirely false. It follows also, that all the facts which have a necessary dependance on this fundamental one, such are his Ascension into heaven, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the copious effusion of the heavenly gifts, deserve not the least credit, and

and are to be utterly rejected. To sum up all in a few words, if there be no reality in the resurrection of Christ, the whole edifice of Christianity falls to the ground, together with the foundation on which it rests.

On the other hand, if Christ be risen, if he fulfilled his promise in this respect, and thereby demonstrated his divinity, which was the end he proposed to himself, then it is evident, that he is true God, the prophecies which announce his resurrection are verified, all his other promises are to be depended on, all the miracles he wrought are to be admitted without dispute, and we may glory in having our faith so firmly established.

Now, Christians, as this first of all miracles was the most striking proof of his divinity which our Saviour could have given the world, you must be edified when you take a view of the wonderful way of God's providence, who has been pleased to lay this essential point in the clearest light. It is remarkable, that the contrivance of the Jews, and the incredulity of the disciples, contribute to make the truth shine forth with additional splendour. Immediately after our Saviour's death, the priests and Pharisees recollecting what he had said concerning his resurrection, call for a body of soldiers to guard the tomb, lest his disciples should come by night, take away the body, and give out among the people, that he was risen according to his promise. At once their request is complied with, the tomb is surrounded by soldiers, the public seal is affixed on the stone which covered its entrance. But after all these precautions, the tomb is found empty. O my God, how foolish are the deep-laid schemes of worldly wisdom when they pretend to counteract thy holy will! The very means made use of to baffle thy eternal decrees, are the means of displaying their accomplishment. Cannot he who first gave life to man, reunite the fragmen-

of his body, and restore him to life? Is it not a greater miracle to give being to that which was not, than to repair that which was? But how many religious truths are lost on us, because we do not sufficiently attend to them? It is therefore necessary that you form a proper idea of the great truth, which is the object of your devotion on this day.

The fact having happened exactly as it was foretold, Jewish malice attempts to elude the force of it, but what a pitiful shift these great Sages are reduced to! To a fact of such great moment they have nothing else to oppose, but a silly tale which excuses itself, that the disciples stole away the body, while the guards were asleep. Observe on the other hand the incredulity of the disciples, they believe not that their Lord is risen, till they are empowered by evidence; he converses familiarly with them; he eats and drinks with them; he reminds them of what he had told them before his passion; he appears not to one or two only, but to them all together, not once, but at several times; he gives them the same proofs of his having a real body after the resurrection, that he had given them before it; he desires one of them, who was more incredulous than the rest, to feel the prints of the nails in his sacred hands and feet, and forces him to cry out: My Lord, and my God.

But what a glorious scene is exhibited to our view, a few days after the resurrection. The Apostles with undaunted courage appear in the centre of Jerusalem, they proclaim aloud the resurrection of Christ; in testimony thereof they work the most extraordinary miracles, they style themselves witnesses of the resurrection: this is the subject of their admirable discourses, by which they convert so many thousands; they expose themselves to the severest torments, even to death itself, by announcing Christ crucified, and risen from the dead.

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And what crowns all, did they not seal their faith with their blood, after having spread the doctrine of the resurrection over the world? Christians, pour out your souls in acts of thanksgiving to the Almighty, who has established his holy religion on a solid foundation, against which all the powers of darkness cannot prevail. In vain does infidelity renew her attacks with redoubled fury and malice; the resurrection stands secure, and bids defiance to all her efforts.

But how must our gratitude be raised, when we go farther and consider, that the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our hope? Yes, Christians, as the body of Christ is clothed with glory and immortality, so shall these bodies of ours also be, if we duly prepare them for so happy a state. The resurrection of the dead necessarily follows from that of our Redeemer, as St. Paul assures us when he speaks of certain unbelievers in his time who admitted, that Christ rose from the dead, but rejected the doctrine of the General Resurrection. The Apostle asks with surprise, how they could grant the one, and deny the other. He observed that Christ is the first born of the dead, that is to say, the first who rose from the grave, so as to be for ever after out of the power of death. Hence he distinguishes the resurrection of Christ from other resurrections, that were merely temporary and did not exclude a second payment of the great natural debt. These expressions, of first born of the dead, first fruits of the dead, necessarily suppose, that there are others to succeed him, and to rise from the dead, as he did. Christ is our head, we are his members: the natural order of things requires, that the members follow their head, be united to it, and partake of the same happiness. We know, that the Man God is placed at the right hand of his heavenly Father, that his sacred humanity, which enabled him to suffer for us, exalted

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exalted beyond what we can conceive or express. Can we think, that this reward of his humanity is an exclusive one, to be confined to Christ our head, and not to be extended to us his members? No, Christians, the second Adam is come to reverse the sentence, in which the first Adam was involved with all his posterity: Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return. He is come to enliven what was dead; he declares, that a time shall be, when all they, who are laid in their graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God; then he will gather from the several parts of the earth the precious remains of his elect; though they should be scattered before the wind, burnt to ashes, or cast into the deep, yet their God will find them out, and preserve them for ever, not a hair of their head shall perish. Then by a second creation more glorious than the first, he will breathe into their mortal bodies the spirit of immortality.

And cannot he, who created these bodies out of nothing, new mould them again, so as to make them like unto his own glorious body? Is it impossible that the body should rise, because death has once taken hold of it, and kept possession of it for a time? Do you not see a grain of corn sown in the earth die there, and afterwards spring up and multiply? It is true, we cannot explain the nature and properties of glorified bodies; but we may be assured, that heaven is not more different from this earth, than the spiritual glorified body shall be from that mass of flesh and blood, which we drag on through this life. Let us hear the account which St. Paul gives us of it: It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. These bodies, then, which in our present state are subject to infirmities, pains, diseases, continual alterations, de-

cays, and death, shall be freed from all those evils, and vested with all the qualities and privileges of a spiritual nature. This perfect and glorious state of the body, taken together with the happiness of the immortal soul, which is a complete reward for the labours of the real Christian, who has employed all his faculties in the service of his Maker; for it takes in the happiness of the whole man, who is a compound of soul and body. How justly then may we say, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Was it not the firm belief of a glorious resurrection that supported Job under the bitterest anguish, and filled his soul with comfort and joy? This holy man says: I believe that my Redeemer liveth, and in my flesh I shall behold God my Saviour. Was it not the same glorious prospect that supported the Martyrs under the most excruciating tortures; and enabled them to brave the rage and malice of their barbarous enemies? You may, for these holy champions of Christ, disfigure and mutilate our bodies; but we know, that he who from the highest heavens beholds our conflict, will restore them to us, flourishing in the bloom of immortal youth; the scars and wounds we receive for no other crime but that of confessing his adorable name, shall be changed into rays of light; you may tear and mangle our flesh as much as you please, our God will raise it up again, and crown it with glory.

Enter, Christians, into these sentiments, whatever calamities may befall you, Christ risen from the grave will afford you abundant matter of consolation. In vain does the spirit of impiety and irreligion strive to shed every where its baneful influence, and instil its poison into the minds and hearts of men; all the blasphemies vomited from hell shall never tear from us the reviving hope that is lodged in our bosoms. O you, that are true followers

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lowers of the gospel, can you sufficiently admire the goodness and mercy of your God, who will not suffer your bodies to lie in the dust forgotten and unrewarded! They have a share in your virtuous actions, they have contributed, as far as in them lay, to the honour and glory of their Maker: this is enough to entitle them to a glorious resurrection. O religion, how lovely are thy truths! How consoling thy promises! Christians, you are transported at the thought of the glory and happiness prepared for you, you long to secure to yourselves the enjoyment of them; but how is this to be done? By a spiritual resurrection modelled on the resurrection of Christ; this will be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

We may expect to share in the glorious resurrection of our Saviour, if we follow the advice of St. Paul, who desires us to put off the old man, and put on the new. The old man is the man of sin and corruption; but the new man is created according to God, in justice, in holiness, and in truth. This is an exact notion of a spiritual resurrection, which supposes a perfect disengagement from all mortal sin, and a happy establishment in the state of grace. It is needless to produce the many passages of holy Writ, where this condition is required as absolutely necessary to qualify us for a glorious resurrection with Christ. We know, that a man buried in the grave of sin, is in a state of enmity with the Almighty: that, while he continues to be so, he forfeits all right to the rewards of the just, and consequently to a glorious resurrection, which is the perfection of their happiness. His body instead of being a temple of the Holy Ghost, and a vessel of honour and election, is a sink of iniquity, and a vessel of dishonour and reprobation: how then can it be a proper subject for being

being transformed into a nature entirely spiritual and heavenly? No: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption. How then can the sinner, who is immersed in flesh and blood pretend to rise to glorious and immortal life? Perhaps not satisfied to end his days according to the ordinary course of nature, he sinks under the load of his criminal excesses, and makes a short cut to the grave. In this case, you know, that there is another kind of resurrection for him, a resurrection to eternal misery. Christians, if any one among you should be a slave to any darling vice, he may be assured, that the joy of this great solemnity does not regard him. No: penitential tears, sighs, and groans should be his portion; the more he has indulged his sinful flesh, the more he should punish it, nor should he give over, till a thorough change be wrought in his heart. Then may he come with confidence to his God, who will open wide the arms of his mercy to receive the prodigal son.

But, if the difficulty he finds in disposing himself for the sacred mysteries, makes him start back, and leave the work of his conversion undone for the present; let him reflect, that his difficulties will be always on the increase, he will carry with him the additional guilt of having violated a precept which he was strictly bound to fulfil. If you have not as yet made your peace with God, it is to be hoped that you are firmly resolved to do so; now, that the Church summons you to this great duty. But do you take care to model your spiritual resurrection on the glorious resurrection of Christ, who once risen from the dead, dies no more? How different are the resurrections you generally make; they are mere temporary ones, they resemble the apparitions of those who rose from their graves about the time of the resurrection of Christ, but

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soon after returned to join the dead. It is true, the weakness of our natures subjects us to several changes and imperfections; but this is no excuse for relapses of a grievous kind.

If you mean to prevent so great an evil, you will not depend too much on those first moments of fervour, when you are all on fire: these fits of devotion are soon over, and they leave you just as they found you, or perhaps worse; for pride may very well steal in on these occasions, and tempt you to be over-pleased with yourselves. In these moments you form resolutions to avoid such places, companies, and amusements as might have been to you an occasion of sin. But are you exact in performing these resolutions? You are satisfied that you love your God at the time that he vouchsafes to communicate himself to you, and to be incorporated with you; you even flatter yourselves that nothing shall be able to separate you from him. And have you not the same God to serve a week or a month after your communion, a God who has at all times an indisputable right to your homage and fidelity? But, alas! the time of trial comes on; all your fine notions of virtue, and of the love of God vanish at once; you yield; you suffer yourselves to be carried away by the violence of your passions, by the torrent of bad example, by the corruption of your hearts: this is frequently repeated until you think it high time for another communion; then indeed you are under some restraint for a while, but you soon break loose, and relapse into your former disorders. Christians, if our lives be composed of this constant round of rising and falling, and this is the case of thousands, you have every reason to suspect the sincerity of your conversions. You must, then, be in a settled unshaken disposition of standing to those solemn engagements, which were sealed with the blood of a God, otherwise the work of your conversion may be compared

pared to a house built on the sand, and destined to be the sport of winds and waves : your resurrection then to the life of grace must be a real one, and not a phantom, it must be lasting, and not temporary. Christ gave the most unquestionable proofs of his being truly risen, so must you. Let the uniformity of your conduct, and your constant fervour in good works bear witness to the reality of your resurrection.

And as we know a living body by its motion, so we know the life of faith and grace by good works. If therefore you see a man zealous in the practice of every thing that is good, and cheerful in the fervent discharge of his duty, you may safely conclude that faith is living in him. He who sincerely returns to God, keeps at a distance from the places and companies he used to frequent, he is risen ; he is no longer there. He who made the streets ring with his oaths and blasphemies, swears and blasphemes no more ; the avaricious man, whose heart was shut up against the necessities of his fellow-creatures, opens his heart and his hands to relieve them : the drunkard bids an eternal adieu to his sottish companions, knowing that death and hell are in their cups : he scandalized his neighbours by his disorderly life, now he edifies them by a life of order, sobriety, and temperance. The libertine whose days and nights were spent in the gratification of his carnal desires, who was never happy, but when he had victims to sacrifice to his brutal lust, breaks off his wicked engagements, and rises triumphant from the grave of his sinful habits. He who was a slave to passion, malice, and revenge, who could not bear to see his offending brother, no, not even to hear his name mentioned in his presence, now forgets his former enmity, lays aside his vindictive spirit, forgives him from his heart, and thus imitates the example of his Lord and Saviour, who prayed, died, and rose again.

again for those who crucified him. O my God, how glorious are such conversions! Here thy right hand visibly appears: here we behold the wonders of thy victorious grace. Rejoice then, O holy Spouse of Jesus Christ, Mother of the faithful rejoice; your children are risen, they are come to life.

Would to God we could point out many conversions of this kind. But alas! how many, notwithstanding their confessions and communions, continue ever wedded to the same disorders, they open their eyes to the light, but the principles of death subsist still in their hearts, and plunge them back again into the night of the grave; inordinate self-love, like a slow poison, infects the whole body of their actions, their wounds bleed afresh, and exhale an odour of corruption. They fancy themselves to be living, because they give some exterior signs of life; but alas! they sleep in death. They are like ghosts hovering about their graves, like insects playing about the flames which scorch and them. How then can we say that they are risen, when their actions prove them to be dead? Remember, that Christ risen from the dead dies no more; death has no dominion over him. Let sin no longer reign in your mortal bodies, for which Christ has prepared a glorious immortality. If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; let all your thoughts and desires be spiritual and heavenly; when once you taste the sweets of a resurrection to the life of grace, let nothing tempt you to plunge yourselves again into the grave of sin. Let the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world vanish from before your eyes; let heaven be constantly in your view. Thus, you will implant in your souls the principles of a spiritual life, the new man will rise on the ruins of the old; and all your faults and imperfections will be consumed in the pure flames of divine charity. Such, Christians,

tians, ought to be your sentiments whenever you approach the Author and Fountain of all grace. Risen with Christ you will celebrate in a proper manner that glorious victory, by which he has delivered you from the slavery of the devil, from everlasting misery.

It is not by dissolute mirth, worldly diversions, revels, or intemperance, that the God of all purity and sanctity is to be honoured. No; an holy and spiritual joy is the only one that is pleasing to him; or suitable to this great solemnity. What a misfortune would it be, to deprive yourselves of all the advantages that might be expected from a course of mortification and penance? This would be the case, were you now to indulge yourselves in the sinful gratifications of flesh and blood, and give loose reins to those passions which you had kept under restraint. If you have not as yet been admitted to that divine banquet, to which your blessed Saviour and his holy Church invite you, let the main object of your attention be to prepare yourselves for the greatest blessing you can enjoy on earth, I mean a worthy communion. Then indeed, you will know and feel, how good your God is to those that love him: Then will a pure and heavenly joy warm and expand your hearts.

O divine Saviour, conqueror of death, author of life, and light of the world, accept the homage of a grateful people for all the wonders thou hast wrought in their favour. Thou art our teacher, our model, our sure and unerring guide to those mansions of bliss which thou hast thrown open to us on this day. May we hear with docility and respect the Oracles of thy eternal wisdom. Thou hast declared, that, unless we eat thy flesh and drink thy blood, we shall not have life in us; may we be adorned with the nuptial robe of grace and charity, which will render us pleasing in thy sight

and qualify us for that life-giving food, which in the excess of thy love and mercy thou hast prepared for us. Without thy assistance, O Lord, we can neither begin nor finish the work of our salvation. May they who are spiritually dead, rise to life, and fall no more. May they who are advanced in the way to happiness, obtain from thee such constant and plentiful supplies of grace, as may secure them against their own weakness and inconstancy so much to be dreaded here below. O my God, thy delight is to be with the children of men, cleanse and purify us, that as often as we receive thee into our mortal bodies, we may be the more disposed for a glorious and immortal resurrection. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N XIII.

ON PRAYER.

For the Fifth Sunday after Easter.

Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.
John xvi. 23.

IN these days of salvation which the Church has consecrated in a particular manner to the exercise of fasting and penance, nothing can be more to our purpose, than to keep up an holy intercourse with heaven by devout and humble prayer. Our blessed Saviour commands us to send up our petitions to the throne of grace, he encourages us by the prevailing motive of our own interest, he gives us the strongest and most positive assurances, that our requests shall be granted, our infirmities healed, and all our wants supplied. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. When we consider, on what occasion, in what circumstances, he made this consoling promise to his disciples, we shall feel ourselves animated with a lively confidence in him who has given so many proofs of his boundless love for man, who is both able and wil-

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ling to perform what he promises. He is soon to return to his heavenly Father, he takes his last farewell of his disciples, he knows what they are to undergo from a persecuting world, which was to rise up in arms against the doctrine they were to preach; he knows, that they are to be like sheep in the midst of ravenous wolves: he therefore holds out to them relief and comfort, he desires them to look up to heaven for support under their afflictions, he assures them, that even in this life their hearts would be filled with an holy joy, a foretaste of that fulness of joy reserved for him in the next. Christians, in our present state of trial and probation, we are beset with dangers on every side; many and serious are the difficulties; where then can we find security or peace to our souls, but in following the advice of our blessed Saviour: Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. What he so earnestly recommends to our practice he has done himself. We may say, that his whole life was one continued prayer; he was incessantly employed in doing the will of his heavenly Father: this was his meat and his drink. Do not the Evangelists remark, that he spent his nights in prayer? Did he not give up his last breath in prayer when he implored forgiveness for those who crucified him, when he recommended his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father? Did he not clearly prove the efficacy of prayer, when he made use of it as a preparation for the greatest wonders he wrought? He lifts up his eyes to heaven, and the loaves and fishes are prodigiously multiplied in his hands; at other times he calls on his Father, and forces death to give up his prey. Not satisfied with this, he has left us a perfect model of prayer: he has repeatedly declared, that without prayer we can do nothing; that by the help of prayer we may expect every grace, and every blessing.

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Thus, he has pointed out to us our evils and the remedies of them, our wants and our resources, the happiness we ought to seek and the means of attaining it. The spirit of prayer was the valuable legacy he bequeathed to his Church. Accordingly in her infant state you might have seen men of piety, who in their solemn acts of homage and adoration imitate the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem. Raised above the concerns of this life, their thoughts were absorbed in the glories of the next; charity glowed in their breasts, serenity beamed on their countenances, the reflected image of that peace and happiness they enjoyed within. Such are the examples we ought to follow. Every Christian, as an heir of heaven, ought to be instant in prayer; he ought continually to send up his ardent sighs towards his glorious inheritance; his heart and his conversation ought to be in heaven where his treasure is. But alas! how far are the generality of Christians from answering this description? A restless anxiety about the perishable goods of this life, a total indifference with regard to the concerns of the next, have taken place of that primitive fervour, those earnest longings after immortality, which characterized our predecessors in the faith. And when once our modern Christians lose sight of the end, it follows of course that they also disregard the means. Hence many of them carried away by their passions, or distracted by the noise and bustle of life, either totally neglect prayer, or at best, are but cool and languid in the practice of it. Others pray a good deal, but they do not sufficiently attend to the dispositions which ought to accompany their prayers. Now as prayer is one of the most powerful means of salvation, as he who prays well, cannot but live and die well, you are convinced that no subject can be more important, more essentially connected with your true interests, than that which I mean

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with the divine assistance, to lay before you in the following discourse. The two great objects I propose to myself, are, First, To engage the attention of those who may be lukewarm or indifferent in the practice of prayer, by proving, that prayer is not only useful, but absolutely necessary. And Secondly, to guard those, who may be addicted to fall into the practice of it, against any mistakes that they may be apt to commit, by shewing them, in what the life and soul of prayer consist. In a word the necessity and advantages of prayer shall be the subject of the first part: the dispositions which ought to accompany it, the subject of the second.

O blessed Saviour, who from thy perfect knowledge of our wants and miseries hast commanded us to pray, grant us grace to obey thy commands, and teach us how to pray. Give us that spirit of prayer, which is the soul of piety, the foundation of religion, and the distinctive mark of thy true disciples. Purify our hearts and our lips, that our prayers may ascend like grateful incense before thee, and draw down the treasures of thy mercy. If hitherto we have neglected so essential a duty, we humbly implore thy pardon and forgiveness. If the corruption of our hearts has sullied the purity of our devotion, destroy that corruption, and raise the edifice of grace and charity on its ruins. We beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, who bore so near a relation to thee, O Author of all sanctity, whose life, buried in holy solitude and contemplation, disposed her for that eminent degree of glory, to which she is raised in heaven. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

That we are indispensably bound to raise our minds to God by prayer, is a truth stamp'd on the human heart in characters never to be effaced. To convince

convince you of it, it will be enough to observe, that man is a dependant, weak, and guilty creature; called from his original nothing to his present state of existence: whatever he is, whatever he has, he owes to the Almighty, who continually upholds his being, without whose providential care he could not exist one single moment. Every breath of air he draws is a fresh proof of the preserving love of his Creator, every blessing he enjoys flows from the source of all that is good. Is it not then his duty to lift up his eyes to heaven, and send back praise and thanksgiving for the favours he receives? Can he do less than acknowledge his dependance, and pay a tribute of homage, of adoration and gratitude to the Author of his being, to his first and best benefactor. Why has he a heart to love, and a tongue to celebrate the wonders of divine goodness, but that he may consecrate all his faculties to him, from whom he receives them, and promote his honour and glory to the utmost of his power, and make this lower world resound with the praises of his God? But what are the benefits conferred on us in the order of nature, if compared with those which the Almighty, in his tender mercy, has been pleased to bestow on us in the order of grace? How grand, how glorious the prospects which Christianity opens to our view: Is not our redemption through Jesus Christ, an inestimable blessing? By it we are delivered from the tyranny of sin, death, and hell, and raised from the most abject misery, to the sublime pre-eminence of adopted children of God, and heirs of immortality. Oh, here we are lost in the immensity of divine love. Can any one give a stronger proof of his love for another, than to die for him? But this our God has done for us. Yes, the eternal Word came down from the throne of his heavenly Father, opened all the veins of his sacred humanity, and shed for us the last drop of his

his most precious blood. Is not this enough to call forth the warmest transports of gratitude and devotion? Surely, that heart must be totally depraved, which can remain cold and insensible to such an excess of goodness. What we feel in a strong and lively manner, we are naturally prompted to express: And what is prayer, but the language of the heart, the genuine expression of our pious sentiments? You see then, my dear Christians, that prayer, as an act of praise and thanksgiving, is a tribute due to God on many indisputable titles. Let us now consider it in another point of view, as the expression of desires formed by the sense we have of our weakness and misery, and animated by the hope of obtaining what we ardently wish for.

That we are weak and wretched creatures, is a truth so obvious as to require no proof. Here I can appeal to your own experience; for, since the unhappy fall of human nature, man feels an intestine war carrying on in his heart, he feels a conflict of tumultuous passions, he feels a constant and violent opposition between his duty and his inclination. It is true, he has the light of reason to direct him, but this faint and glimmering light is soon obscured by the clouds which rise from the corruption of a heart, where the senses and passions have established their empire. And what ought to humble our pride to the dust is the painful and mortifying reflection, that it is a degrading and humiliating vice with which we are more or less affected; man, deluded man, is in love with his misery, and fears to be delivered from it; he hugs his chains, he does not wish to break them. Reason is drawn into the snare, and vainly attempts to justify those unruly passions which she ought to be the first to condemn. This is a true picture of the heart of man, many and powerful are the enemies that meditate his ruin; the world is to him

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a continual source of temptation, the contagious example of the children of iniquity invites him to an imitation of their disorders; sensible objects attract his regards; criminal pleasures, with a blinding aspect, court his acceptance; he is in danger of being puffed up by prosperity, or broken down by adversity, elated by success, or saddened by disappointment: he is every moment on the brink of a precipice; if left to himself he is lost for ever. To whom shall he apply for relief and assistance? Who will hold out a charitable hand to save him from ruin? To whom shall he fly for shelter and protection? To whom Christians, hearken to the Father of mercies? Truly, O my God, we are a compound of weakness, we are closely besieged by our spiritual enemies, our own hearts are in league with them, this violent struggle is the last for life; how wretched then would our situation be, had we not thy Almighty arm to defend us, to fight with us and for us, and crown us with victory. In thee we find support and strength to our weakness, comfort and joy in our afflictions, security in the midst of danger, the treasures of grace to enrich our poverty, an unerring light to direct our steps and lead us into the paths of peace and happiness. How blind must we be to our eternal interests, if we do not continually look up to thee, and endeavour to dwell in thy holy protection under the shadow of thy wings? In a dreadful storm would we not wish for a calm? In sickness would we not sigh for recovery, on the point of perishing with hunger would we not cry out for nourishment?

Oh Christians, had you a proper sense of your spiritual miseries, you would paint them in the heartfelt language of distress, your feelings would give eloquence to your expressions, it would be a relief to you to lay open your wounds to your heavenly Physician, you would offer him an holy vi-

tence by your tears, your sighs, your fervent prayers, you would not cease importuning him till you would force him to look down with an eye of pity on you, open the bowels of his mercy in your favour, and restore peace and health to your soul. If the body be threatened with the least danger, at once we are alarmed, the fear of worldly disgrace torments and distracts us, and the dangers of our immortal souls leave us calm and undisturbed. Suffer us not, O my God, to sleep in death: give us a lively sense of our miseries; from thee we expect our deliverance. Deliver us then, O Lord, and save us, for we are perishing: We must be mortal strangers to our own hearts, to that weight of guilt and corruption under which we groan, if we do not continually lift up our trembling hands and sleeping eyes to heaven. Sin must be punished either by the sinner in this world, or by the justice of God in the next. Is there any one among us that has not sinned? Man brings with him into this world that original stain which marks him a child of wrath: this stain is effaced by the salutary waters of regeneration. He comes to the use of reason, and the first use he makes of it, is, to offend his God, one crime leads to another, every day is a witness to fresh transgressions, till perhaps the black catalogue of his iniquities exceeds in number the hairs of his head. Now if the grace of God should open his eyes to his unhappy state, what will be the first impressions made on his soul? He knows that he has incurred the divine wrath, that he is in danger of feeling all the dreadful consequences of it, he sees the avenging flames kindled by the justice of God; he sees his place marked out for him, if he does not repent. Such are the gloomy prospects which his faith holds out to him.

But is there no ray of hope to cheer his desponding soul? Yes, Christians, if he confesses his guilt,

looks up to his God, whose tender mercies are over all his works, endeavours to appease his wrath, detests his crimes, and humbly implores pardon and forgiveness. The prayer of the sinner ought to be a beginning of repentance; as sin is the greater obstacle to his happiness, the grace of reconciliation ought to be the first object of his desires. But if, while he seems to pray, his thoughts are bent on evil, if his criminal attachments continue still to bind his heart in chains, if he has not a proper sense of the enormity of his guilt, his prayers are so many insults to the divine majesty. How can he expect mercy when he is determined to abuse it? How can he think, that the Almighty will look down with an eye of pity on him, when he takes no pains to satisfy his justice and appease his wrath? Presumptuous man! you are in open enmity with your God, and you flatter yourself that you have a right to his friendship, you expect favours, and you deserve nothing but punishment. Are you not ashamed to appear in the face of heaven loaded with all the demerits of a guilty wretch without the humility or sincere sorrow of a penitent. But if the sinner earnestly wish to break his chains, an Almighty arm is ready to assist him: the same mercy which was shewn to thousands will be extended to him, if he sues for it in a proper manner. When the penitent Magdalen bathed our Saviour's feet with her tears, did he not declare, that many sins were forgiven her, because she loved much? Is not the pardon granted to the humble publican an encouragement to the greater sinners to have recourse to the divine mercy, provided they humble themselves before the offended majesty of their God, and weep over the wounds of their souls, which are incurable without the aid of their heavenly Physician. Now, Christians, I have endeavoured to prove to you, how necessary prayer is for man considered as a dependant, weak

and guilty creature, I need not insist much on the efficacy and advantages of this holy exercise. In every part of the sacred writings, striking instances occur of the extraordinary influence prayer has on the Almighty. Joshua fights against the Amalekites; Moses prays on the mountain and gains the victory. A fiery furnace is prepared to consume three Hebrew children who confide in the power and goodness of their God, and prayer preserves them. The prophet Daniel, in danger of being devoured by lions, tames them by prayer. Prayer makes the chains of Peter fall to the ground. Prayer commands the dead to arise. Prayer diminishes the wrath of heaven. The Israelites worship the golden calf, and call down the divine vengeance on their heads. Moses prays for the people; the Lord desires him to give over praying, that he may destroy them. Moses redoubles his prayers; the Lord yields to Moses, and is appeased. Do we not read in the holy Scriptures, that the sun was stopped in its course by the force of prayer: the Almighty repeatedly assures us, that he can refuse nothing to the humble and fervent prayers of his servants. Does not our blessed Saviour declare, that if we ask the Father any thing in his name, he will give it to us? On the truth of his promises we may rely with an absolute certainty. What can be more astonishing than that the heavens should be shut and opened at the command of prayer? Elias prays, that it may not rain upon the earth, and it rains not for three years and six months; he prays again, and the heavens give rain and the earth brings forth her fruit. In a word, prayer is the key that unlocks the treasures of heaven, it ascends to the throne of God, and brings down every grace we stand in need of; it is an inexhaustible source of blessings to those who pray as they ought. How comes it then, that our prayers are in general so fruitless, so unavailing; that

that we ask, and receive nothing? It is because we ask amiss: We have not the dispositions that ought to accompany our prayers, in order to make them acceptable in the sight of God. What are these dispositions shall be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

The principal dispositions necessary to render our prayers efficacious are humility, fervour, and perseverance. In the first place, humility ought to recommend our prayers. When we consider the infinite majesty of God on the one hand, and our own meanness and insignificance on the other, we must be struck with a reverential awe in his presence, and confounded at the thought of our unworthiness. What merit have we to entitle us to the blessings of heaven? None at all: Is not the happiness we expect to enjoy, are not the means of attaining it, free gifts of God through the merits of Jesus Christ? What would become of us had not our Saviour mercifully interposed in our favour, and cancelled the hand-writing that was against us? A wall of separation was raised between man and his offended God, the throne of the divine Mercy was inaccessible, the gates of heaven were shut against him. In this wretched situation his unavailing prayers and sighs would be lost in air. But thanks for ever to our Redeemer who subjected himself to the malediction pronounced against us, satisfied the justice of his heavenly Father, and purified us by the effusion of his blood. On what foundation then can we rest our hopes? Is it not on the merits of Jesus Christ? Yes; covered with the blood of the Lamb we may present ourselves before our God, implore his aid, solicit his graces, and aspire to immortal bliss. If we depend on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, there is nothing we may not expect; if we depend merely

on ourselves, we are without life, without power, without hope, we are nothing in the order of grace. Will any one dare to insult the divine majesty, by his pride and presumption while he pretends to pray? Will he who is but dust and ashes, glory in his imaginary perfection? Will he judge favourably of himself and condemn others? Will he say with the proud Pharisee: Lord I am not like the rest of men. Oh, can such prayers find acceptance with heaven? No; they must be instantly rejected, they must draw down a curse instead of a blessing. But the man who humbly acknowledges his guilt and unworthiness, who knows that the voice of his iniquities cries to heaven for vengeance, who flies from the terrors of God's justice, and takes shelter in the wounds of Jesus; let him send up his humble supplications, his sighs and groans to the throne of grace, his prayers will be heard by that God, who resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. To whom shall I have respect, says the Lord, but to him that is poor and lowly, and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at my words? Can any thing be more reasonable, than that we be humble in addressing our petitions to the Almighty, that our prayers be expressive of the lively sense we have of our miseries? If we were to solicit a favour from one of the great ones of the earth, would we not shew him every mark of respect and deference due to his rank? Would not our words, looks, and manner be so composed, as to engage his attention, and induce him to grant our requests? How then can you presume to present yourselves before the Almighty in a haughty manner, as if you demanded a strict right instead of begging a favour? You imagine, that something is due to your pretended merit, to your pretended good works, you claim a certain degree of preference and distinction. But you do not consider that such groundless claims render your prayers

prayers odious in the sight of heaven. Let us, therefore, prostrate ourselves as criminals before our God, convinced, that we do not deserve to be heard on our own account, relying at the same time on the infinite merits of our divine mediator, who shed the last drop of his blood for us; let us pray with the humble publican: O God, be merciful to me a sinner. He will grant a favourable hearing to those prayers which humility inspires. O my God, a contrite and humble heart thou wilt not despise.

The second disposition to render our prayers acceptable in the sight of God, is fervour. What is prayer, but the desire of the heart manifested to God? It is then the heart that prays, and without the desires of the heart, let the lips be ever busy, there is no prayer. Now when the heart is engaged, there can be neither langour nor indifference, the warmth of our feelings gives life and energy to our expressions; the voice of fervour is the cry of the heart; this voice is not silent, but when the heart ceases to desire. What do we pray for? We pray for the inestimable gift of final perseverance, for the possession of God, for eternal happiness. And can such gifts as these, the only true and solid gifts, the only gifts that can fill the whole capacity of our souls, be asked in a cold, heartless, insipid manner? Can we be so devoid of all feeling, as to shew that it is a matter of indifference to us, whether we obtain them or not? To whom do we address our prayers? To that God whose all-seeing eye pierces the inmost recesses of our hearts, who discovers at once that we do not listen to ourselves, that consequently we have no right to expect a favourable hearing from him. Is not this single thought enough to command all the powers of our souls, captivate our senses and imaginations, to make us steady and recollected, recall our hearts and our minds to him, who is our first beginning.

beginning and our last end? We know, that he has pronounced a malediction against those who do his work negligently: can any act of religion be more the work of God than prayer? Will any one then, who is penetrated with a sense of these truths, pretend to honour God with his lips, while his heart is far from him? Will he lay open the wounds of his soul to his heavenly Physician without a sincere desire of being healed, will he represent to him his wants and necessities, as if they did not regard him? No; he will feel what he says in the presence of his God, from whom he expects relief; he will be happy in conversing with him, and being admitted to his confidence. How comes it then, that prayer is considered by the generality of Christians, as a painful exercise, a heavy yoke, a disagreeable task, which they wish to get rid of as soon as possible? They find themselves in an uneasy situation, because their hearts are not affected, and therefore the time set apart for so heavenly an employment, hangs heavy on their hands. On all other occasions we do not want for sensibility; in the company of our friends we find a source of enjoyment, in their absence they fill us with grief and concern; our hearts are overcharged when we cannot unbosom ourselves to them; it is a relief to us to pour out our souls before them; the comfort they administer to us lightens our sufferings, assuages our sorrows, and suspends the very feeling of pain. And yet, O my God, in that holy intercourse which thou hast opened to us by prayer, when we ought to be happy in the enjoyment of thy blessed society, O best of friends, we find neither comfort nor satisfaction. One would imagine, that we doubted of thy goodness, we do not address ourselves to thee with that just and rational confidence, which faith inspires. Thou alone, O my God, must meet with hearts cold and insensible to the favours of thy friendship.

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The third disposition necessary to render our prayers powerful and efficacious is perseverance. The Almighty often defers granting our requests, to make us sensible of the value of his gifts, to try our fidelity and submission to his holy will, and reward our patience. He wishes to be solicited and importuned; his kingdom and the graces that conduct us thither suffer violence. He seems to be deaf to our prayers; this is a trial of our love for him. He means, that we redouble our fervour, that we pray again and again, that we pray without ceasing. Do not the invaluable blessings, which our faith holds out to us, deserve to be prayed for all the days of our lives? Who are we, to set a time to the mercies of God? And yet when you have offered up a few prayers, you begin to be discouraged and to grow uneasy, if you do not feel some sensible marks of the divine favour, you are tempted to discontinue the holy exercise of prayer, as if it were useless and unprofitable. You flatter yourselves, that you have done every thing on your part to draw down the blessings of heaven, and that God does not hear you. Oh, will you lose the merit of your past labours and prayers by your murmuring and impatience? Oh, had you persevered, had you continued to knock at the door of the divine mercy, ere now it had been opened unto you; your joy had been full, and your efforts crowned with success.

You see then, Christians, the absolute necessity of persevering in prayer, offering violence to heaven, and in a manner forcing the Almighty to grant to your importunities, what he seems to deny to your first requests. This is a truth which our Saviour has illustrated by many familiar instances. The example of the Chananian woman recorded in the Gospel, sets it before us in the clearest and strongest light. When she first presents her humble prayer, our Saviour seems to disregard her

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a cold and mortifying silence is the only reply he makes to her. She raises her voice, and redoubles her fervour; the disciples wish to get rid of her importunities. Then she hears a dreadful sentence, which seems to cut off all hopes, and exclude her from the least favour: I was not sent, says our Saviour, but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. This is not enough to discourage her, she persists still to implore his mercy; she worships him, saying: Lord, help me. Our Saviour seems still unmoved; his answer carries with it the appearance of harshness and contempt: It is not good to take the bread of children, and cast it to dogs. Oh here, what invincible patience appears, what heroic fortitude. Instead of being shocked and confounded by so humiliating a comparison, she applies it to herself. It is true, O Lord, thy favours are not to be thrown away on me a wretched undeserving creature, but the very dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters table. Oh, then he gains the heart of the compassionate Jesus; he can hold out no longer; he is forced to yield; he gives vent to the transports of admiration he had checked before: O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt. Here, Christians, is a perfect model of prayer. Here you have all the essentials of prayer collected as it were in one point of view, a sincere humility, a lively faith, an unflinching fervour, a steady and unshaken perseverance. Here you have the life and soul of prayer before you. If your prayers be animated with such dispositions, you may be sure of success; for God himself ensures it to you. He is the good Shepherd, who goes in quest of the strayed sheep, puts it on his shoulders, and brings it back to the fold. He is the good Father, who, if his son should call to him for bread will not reach him a stone. Even though a mother should forget the fruit of her womb, he will not, he cannot forget you.

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Let prayer then, Christians, be your darling occupation. If you should be buried in the grave of sin, prayer will raise you from the grave, and restore you to life. Let me suppose that you are in the state of grace, prayer is still necessary for you. Prayer will enable you to maintain your ground, to advance in the way of salvation; prayer will obtain for you that final perseverance, which will crown all your efforts. Your God invites you to pour out your souls before him: Can you reject his loving invitation? He is essentially happy in himself, though you should be lost for ever: but he wishes to make you happy. Will you not express your heartfelt gratitude to him for all his benefits: will you not beseech him to pardon your offences, to support your weakness, to deliver you from those spiritual miseries which oppress your souls? O Father of lights, O Giver of all good gifts, the gift of prayer must come from thee. May thy Holy Spirit form in our hearts those ineffable groans which powerfully move thee to grant our requests. O heavenly Teacher, instruct us in the science of prayer, so essential to our happiness. We are as yet, O my God, at a distance from our true country; inspire us with an ardent desire of that glorious immortality, which thou hast prepared for those who pray for it as they ought. While we are in this vale of tears, may our prayers find acceptance with thee, and open the treasures of thy grace and mercy; and when death shall close our mortal eyes to this world, may our souls be admitted to the clear vision and undisturbed enjoyment of the glories of the next. Amen.

S E R M O N X I V .

ON THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION.

*And when he had said these things, while they looked on,
he was raised up. Acts of the Apostles i. 9.*

THE Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the great and glorious mystery, which the Church at this holy time proposes to our consideration. She feels herself warmly interested in the triumph of her Spouse, and earnestly wishes to communicate to us those sentiments of love, gratitude and devotion, which are so suitable to the present occasion. Our Redeemer has done so much for us, that we never ought to lose sight of him: accordingly, you have followed him through the several stages of his doleful passion; you went up with him to Mount Calvary; there, with weeping eyes, you beheld that bloody tragedy which caused the heavens to weep. But your sadness was soon changed into joy; your tears and mournful strains into hymns of praise and thanksgiving: an Angel announced to you, that your Lord was risen, that he was no longer in the grave. After his resurrection, his native heaven was the only place fit
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to receive him, now immortal and impassible: but his love for man detains him in this vale of tears, which was not worthy of him. It was necessary to convince his disciples that he was truly risen: Accordingly he gave them the most unquestionable proofs of it. He frequently appeared in the midst of them; he conversed familiarly with them; he eat and drank with them; he proved to them the reality of his resurrection in so forcible a manner, that incredulous minds were overpowered by evidence. It was also necessary to instruct them in what related to the establishment of his Church, to give them that divine commission, by which they were qualified to bind or loose, to remit or retain sins, to spread the light of the gospel over the world, and work the most stupendous miracles in confirmation of the truths they preached. Ten days before the feast of Pentecost he manifests himself to them in Jerusalem where they were assembled, gives them his last charge to preach baptism and penance, and assures them that the Holy Ghost would descend upon them. He then leads them to Mount Olivet, in order that they, who were witnesses of his death and passion, may be also witnesses of his ascension. That place which he consecrated by his agony, where his soul felt beforehand all the pains and torments which his body afterwards endured, that place which he bathed with his blood, becomes the theatre on which he displays his glory. With all the tenderness and affection of the best of fathers, he bids his last farewell to his Disciples; and behold, while he is as yet speaking, he is elevated into the air, and ascends visibly before them. He needs not a chariot of fire to convey him, as Elias did, he needs not the assistance of the Angels who waited on him to grace his triumph: supported by his omnipotence, he takes his majestic flight to the highest heavens. With uplifted hands he gives them his blessing. They

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overwhelmed with astonishment, follow with eager looks their Lord and Master, whom they dearly loved, till a bright cloud intercepts their view. They remain gazing on the spot where they last beheld him. Angels must descend to awake them from the profound ecstasy in which they were plunged. From this plain exposition of the fact, you may be able to form a clear and distinct idea of it, and to point out the particular in which the two glorious mysteries of the resurrection and ascension differ from each other. By his resurrection your blessed Saviour triumphed over sin, death and hell; by his ascension he completes his triumph. This is the happy close of his earthly course, the Sabbath, on which he rests from his labours, and the consummation of his glory. If we consider the relation which this mystery bears to ourselves, it is the deliverance of the captive, the comfort of the afflicted, the hope of the faint hearted, the strength of the weak, the exaltation of human nature, the opening of heaven, which was shut for ages against the descendants of Adam. What a dignity is conferred on man to whom it was said: Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return? But now he is a child of heaven. Can he forget his glorious destination. Shall his thoughts and affections be groveling on the earth, ought they not to dwell in heaven, where his treasure is. Have we not then every reason to exult and rejoice? But who are entitled to share in that holy joy which this great solemnity inspires? They who, enlightened by divine faith, are penetrated with a deep sense of all that their Saviour has done and suffered for them, they who are fervent in the practice of all good works, they who faithfully cooperate with the grace of God in making their election and vocation sure. To them the ascension of Jesus Christ affords the highest consolation: for, they walk in that way which leads to heaven. But as to obstinate

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nate and unrepenting sinners, who follow a quite contrary course, they must know, they ought to feel, in all the bitterness of their souls, that they walk in that broad way which leads to perdition. To engage you all to follow your ascending Saviour with your hearts and affections, while you are detained in this vale of tears, in order that you may really ascend glorious and immortal with him, is the main object of the following discourse. In the first part I shall endeavour to prove to you, that the ascension of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ proposes to you the most powerful motives to animate your confidence, and inflame your heart with an holy desire of ascending with him. In the second part I shall lay before you the conditions required of you, in order that you may ascend with him.

O Jesus, who on the day of thy ascension wast pleased to lift up thy hands and bless thy disciples, give us a share in thy blessing. Those hands, which were pierced with sharp nails and fastened to the cross for our iniquities, are now the source of every grace. Lift them up, O Lord, and stretch them over us, that supported by thy powerful aid we may defeat the enemies of our souls. Break those chains which hold our hearts in a wretched bondage, raise them above the earth, and unite them to thee. May the pure flames of divine Charity consume the rust of our sensual and worldly attachments. May we continually sigh after thee, our God, our Redeemer, our Life, our Love and our All. When, O Lord, shall we come and appear before thee, behold thy beauty, and enjoy thy blessed sight? When will thou call us from this land of exile to that heavenly country which thou hast purchased for us? O adorable head of the Church which thou hast formed on earth, and cemented by thy blood, make us members of the Church triumphant, whose glory and happiness

quite to love, praise, and adore thee for ever and ever. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, whose soul overflowed with a pure and heavenly joy, when she beheld the triumph of her Son. *Sail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Christians, when you endeavour with the eye of faith, to follow your blessed Saviour in his triumphant course to the heavenly Jerusalem, you must feel your hearts beat with joy and glow with devotion. At the same time you must humbly confess your inability, and declare, that all your thoughts and expressions must fall infinitely short of the fact itself. All you can pretend to, is a faint representation of it. It is good for us, O Lord, that we should have a strong and feeling conviction of thy power and of our own weakness. In what animated strains does the royal Prophet celebrate the glory of the ascension. He summons the Princes of the heavenly court to meet and receive their Lord and their God. "Lift up your gates, ye princes, ye eternal gates, be ye lifted up, and the King of glory shall enter in." Who is that King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle; he enters as a conqueror leading with him the saints of the old law as the trophies of his victory, the rich spoils he has taken from the enemy, and the ornaments of his triumph. With what gratitude, love and adoration do they sound forth the praises of their illustrious deliverer? All the inhabitants of heaven prostrate themselves before him, the angels cast their crowns at his feet, and sing in rapturous strains: Worthy art thou, O Lamb who was slain to receive honour, glory, benediction and praise for ever and ever. But when he presents himself before him, who had

sent him to sanctify the world, to whom he gave the strongest proofs of his perfect obedience, in whose service he was covered over with wounds, to promote whose honour and glory he was pleased to submit to all the hardships of an obscure, painful and suffering life, for whom he gave himself unto death, and shed the last drop of his precious blood, who can conceive with what transports of joy and affection his heavenly Father receives his well beloved Son: Father, saith he, I have finished the work, which thou hast given me to do; I have manifested thy name to men, now thou wilt reap the fruits of my labours; thou wilt have adorers in spirit and truth, men, who following my example will sacrifice every thing and even themselves for the love of thee. Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, and now glorify thou me, O Father with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was. It is done; he is seated at the right hand of his Father; he is appointed judge of the living and the dead; he receives absolute power and dominion over all creatures both in heaven and on earth; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Having thus contemplated the glory of our blessed Saviour's ascension, let us now consider the relation which this mystery bears to ourselves. We shall find, that it proposes the most powerful motives to animate our confidence, and inflame our hearts with an holy desire of ascending with him. This glorious Conqueror does not triumph for himself alone. No; he wishes to share with us the honour and advantages of his victories. He has given us the most positive assurances of his gracious intentions. I go to prepare a place for you, and I will take you to myself, that where I am, there you may also be. This is the anchor of our hope both sure and steadfast. Jesus is gone into heaven as our forerunner; he invites and commands

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commands us to follow him. He is our head; we are his members. The natural order of things requires, that the members follow their head, be united to it, and share in the same happiness. He is the vine; we are the branches; if we be united to him by the bonds of holy love, we will receive from him constant supplies of strength and nourishment; we will bring forth fruits of eternal life; we will be united to him in glory. Hence that wall of separation is levelled to the ground, which sin had raised between man and his God; the gates of heaven are open, Jesus calls us to himself; all he requires of us is, that we maintain our title to the glorious inheritance he has purchased for us. Praise for ever to him, who has made us acquainted with our dignity, who in his own adorable person has raised our nature above Angels and Archangels, above the highest Cherubims: the ascension of Jesus Christ is a pledge of that glorious immortality which we expect to enjoy both as to soul and body. Have you not then every encouragement to aspire to immortal bliss? But alas! how faint and languid are the efforts you generally make to secure the incorruptible crown? Heaven is the reward held out to you, if you do not exert yourselves, you have no right to expect it. The nature of a reward supposes real and actual services performed by him, on whom it is conferred; now where are the treasures of good works, where are the Christian virtues, that would entitle you to heaven? Compare your indolence and inactivity in respect to everlasting happiness with the fervour and activity of worldlings in pursuit of earthly advantages. How humiliating the contrast! See how they labour and toil, how they strain every nerve, and brave every danger, in order to advance themselves in the world. The hope of success keeps up their spirits, animates their exertions, and smooths the way before them. After

all their labours they may be disappointed in the end, and when they imagine, that they have nearly reached the summit of their wishes, a sudden and unexpected change of circumstances may blast all their hopes for ever. And will you do not as much for heaven, as worldlings do for the fleeting and unsubstantial goods of this life? If you earnestly contend for the prize, you will undoubtedly gain it, you cannot be disappointed for your hopes are built on the promises of God. Let your eyes then be ever turned to that blessed country where all your desires will be perfectly gratified, where Jesus Christ is seated on the right hand of his heavenly Father, and continually exerts himself in our favour as our eternal High Priest, Mediator, and Advocate. You see how many motives of encouragement this great mystery holds out to you. When our Redeemer withdrew his sensible presence from us, he did not mean to leave us orphans. No; in the kingdom of his glory he cannot forget us, whose nature he assumed. He has now the same goodness, the same charity for us, that he had on earth. He loved us so much as to give up his life for us, and sanctify our nature by plunging it in the baptism of his blood. Is he not then ready and willing to grant us those graces and blessings, which are necessary to support us in our mortal pilgrimage, and lead us to himself? No doubt he is: he bears to all eternity the prints of his wounds as the memorials of his sufferings, and the pledges of his love for man. He has written us in his hands, and in his side in characters never to be effaced. He is always living to intercede for us, and present our tears and sighs before the throne of grace. He offers to his heavenly Father the same blood which he shed on the cross, disarming his vengeance, and obtains pardon and forgiveness for repenting sinners. How powerful must his mediation be, when his hands and open side plead in

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our behalf? What a relief must it be to the Christian soul in the midst of her distresses to look up to a compassionate High Priest, who in this vale of tears was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief? In order to obtain a complete cure of our spiritual disorders, all he requires of us is, that we earnestly wish it, that we fervently pray for it, that we neglect not the means which he, in the excess of his love and mercy, has put into our hands. And can we do less? In a dreadful storm would we not wish for a calm? In sickness would we not wish for a recovery? If in danger of perishing with hunger, would we not cry out for nourishment: And shall the dangers of our immortal souls leave us calm and undisturbed. If we be insensible to what so nearly concerns us, if we take no pains to avert the wrath of heaven, which we have provoked by our offences, we exclude ourselves from the benefits of the mediation of Christ. Remember, that though he be your Mediator and Advocate, he is also your Judge: the Father judges no one; the right of judging he has made over to his Son, who exercises this power by his justice or by his mercy. His faithful followers, who believe and hope in him, and keep his commandments, are under the happy dominion of his grace and love; in them he crowns his own gifts, when he calls them to eternal life. But the obstinate and impenitent, who wilfully shut their eyes against the light, rebel against him, and reject the offers of his mercy, must be judged according to the laws of his rigorous justice, and given up to endless rage and despair, and doomed to everlasting torments. We must all be subject to his dominion; we must either be united to our Redeemer by the bonds of love, or separated from him by his wrath and vengeance.

Christians, it is now in your power to make a choice. And on the choice you make, your all depends. Surely it does not require a moment's deliberation

deliberation to determine, whether you would wish to be for ever with your God, or for ever excluded from his blessed presence. Give him your hearts which belong to him by so many titles, which he has formed for himself, and where he wishes to establish his empire. How long will you suffer yourselves to be enslaved by a wretched world, which does not deserve half the pains you take for it? You are strangers and pilgrims on earth, heaven is your country. Let heaven then be the centre of your hopes and expectations; the main object of your thoughts and affections, and the end to which you direct all your labours. Seek the things that are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of his Father. Mind the things that are above, and not the things that are upon earth. Never lose sight of your Lord and Saviour, who on the day of his glorious triumph calls you after him. Let your hearts ascend with him, and though your bodies be on earth, let your souls dwell in heaven. Christians, when you have so glorious a prospect before you, you will look down upon this world with that noble indifference which religion inspires; you will look up to that crown of glory which Jesus Christ holds out to you: You will feel those earnest longings after immortality which characterized the primitive Christians. What could have supported them under the dreadful persecutions which hell and the world raised against them but their lively faith, which made heaven always present to their view? Look up then, Christians, to the heavens, there is the seat of your happiness. Thus, the ascension of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ proposes to you the most powerful motives to animate your confidence, and inflame your hearts with a holy desire of ascending with him. But what are the conditions required of you, in order that you may ascend with him, will be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

It is highly important for us to know this from our blessed Saviour himself, we can learn on what terms we may expect to ascend with, and receive at his hands a crown of glory. On that night of sorrow and anguish, when his bitter passion began, addressing himself to his disciples, he says: I appoint to you, as my Father hath appointed to me, a kingdom: if you mean to enter into it, you must walk in the way which I have marked out for you: you must qualify yourselves for it, as I have done, you must imitate the life which I have led upon earth, if you wish to reign with me in heaven. Now, Christians, what was the life of Jesus Christ on earth but a life of sufferings and humiliations? If you follow him from the manger to the cross, you will discover one continued scene of trouble and distress. He is scarce born into the world, when a violent persecution is raised against him, which forces him to fly and seek a place of refuge in a foreign land. He condemns himself to that state of poverty and obscurity which falls to the lot of the most numerous part of the human race. He was the Lord of all; his was the earth, and the fullness thereof, and yet he declares, that he had not a place, where to recline his head. But when he enters on the public exercise of his ministry, what a variety of hardships has he not to encounter? He is every where contradicted, reviled, and insulted. All the shafts of malice and envy are let loose against him, his words are misconstrued, his actions misrepresented; he is traduced as a seditious man, a disturber of the public peace, and an enemy to his country. He scatters blessings wherever he passes, and he is requited with the most obstinate and perverse opposition. The scorn of the great, the insolence of the rabble, the ingratitude

ingratitude of his friends, the most virulent reproaches, that could be uttered, the blackest calumnies that could be forged by his enemies are the severe trials allotted to him, who had a sovereign right to the homage and adoration of men and angels. All the passions of men, all the powers of hell combine against him. The blood of the spotless Lamb must be spilt, in order to satisfy the envy and malice of his persecutors, I need not describe to you here the manner in which he closes his ministry, nor the pangs he endures on the cross, that bed of sorrows. This I have endeavoured to do on a former occasion.

You see then, Christians, that the bitter cup of afflictions was set before your blessed Saviour during the whole course of his mortal life, that he drank it cheerfully to the very dregs. This is the title on which he demands his kingdom. His meekness, patience and fortitude, his intire submission to the will of his Father are the virtues which merit for his sacred humanity that glorious pre-eminence to which it is raised. He humbled himself becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: Wherefore God has exalted him, and has given him a name which is above every name. The same virtues, Christians, the same titles will open heaven for you. It is by sufferings and humiliations you must purchase a crown of glory: You must resemble the suffering Jesus, if you mean to resemble Jesus glorified: This is a truth sealed with his blood. How strongly he insists on this necessary condition appears from his answer to the sons of Zebedee. They, vainly fancying that he would establish a temporal dominion, wish to hold a distinguished rank in his kingdom. He checks the vanity of their pretensions, and says: Can you drink of the chalice, that I shall drink? Though you be my disciples and favourites, in vain you pretend to

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any place or rank in my kingdom, if you refuse to drink of the bitter cup of afflictions. If you do not accept the terms, if you be not satisfied to undergo the trial, you give up your title to my glory, you are excluded from it for ever. All his maxims tend to enforce the necessity of sufferings. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This, Christians, is the doctrine of Jesus Christ: and yet I appeal to yourselves, if you be not in general averse from suffering the slightest inconvenience, from submitting to any trial that might give you pain or uneasiness. You are satisfied, when every thing succeeds according to your wishes, when you roll on in an overflowing tide of prosperity, when you walk in the flowery paths of ease and pleasure: But, believe me, this is not the way that leads to heaven. Delicate members will become a head crowned with thorns, how then can you aspire to the glory of your Saviour's ascension, when you refuse to follow him through the hard and rugged ways which he has pointed out to you? Can there be a greater misfortune, than to be lulled asleep by the destructive charms of the world, to expose your souls to every danger and live in a total forgetfulness of your God? Now, these are the usual consequences of worldly prosperity. It weakens and enervates the mind, corrupts the heart, inflames the passions, and perverts the blessings of heaven into instruments of guilt. The Almighty, in order to wean you, in spite of yourselves from an excessive attachment to this life, mingles a salutary bitterness with all your pleasures, sends you a severe and unexpected trial, and calls you to order by a seasonable correction. But you, instead of thanking him for such a mark of his goodness and attention to you, are apt to murmur and complain. The reason is obvious; you judge

judge of trials and afflictions from the disagreeable impressions they make on flesh and blood; you do not view them with the eye of faith. Now, if you mean to be convinced of the necessity of sufferings; consider what you are, and what you expect to be: you are sinners, and at the same time you expect to be citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. But surely your sins and your vices cannot find admittance there. No; nothing that is defiled can enter into that glorious kingdom. Sin must be punished either by the sinner in this life, or by the Almighty in the next. You brought into the world that stain of original guilt, which marked you a child of wrath: this stain was effaced by the salutary waters of regeneration. You came to the use of reason, and the first use you made of it was to offend your God: one crime led to another; every day added to your transgressions, and infidelities, till perhaps the black catalogue of your iniquities exceed in number the hairs of your head. And now, will you say, that it is not necessary for you to expiate your offences, that it is not necessary for you to suffer? You cannot be so lost to all sense of reason and religion, as to say it, or to think it. You ought therefore to rejoice, when the Almighty puts the means of salvation into your hands, when in the place of those eternal torments, which you have so often merited, he is pleased to substitute short and transitory afflictions which his grace will enable you to bear. If you continue to murmur against his goodness, he may consider you as unworthy of his fatherly correction, he may listen to your complaints, and allow you to give full scope to your sensual appetites and vicious inclinations. Oh, then your situation would be dreadful indeed. Then you ought to tremble, lest after a life of ease and pleasure, you might be doomed to an eternity of pain and sorrow, and treated like those

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victims which were pampered with care, and decked with flowers, but were soon to feel the deadly blow, and pour out their blood in sacrifice.

Preserve us, O my God from this greatest of all evils. We cheerfully submit to whatever thou art pleased to appoint for us. Here burn, here cut, O Lord, but spare us eternally. Christians, whenever you are afflicted, let your faith come into your aid and display before you the glorious rewards prepared for those who suffer in a Christian manner. This will be enough to beat down that opposition which corrupt nature raises against sufferings; to hush its murmurs and complaints, and fill your souls with comfort and joy. Consider your afflictions as so many steps, by which you may ascend to heaven. It was necessary that Christ himself should suffer, and so enter into his glory. Can you refuse submitting to a law, which your divine Master has so rigorously observed, what are your light crosses if compared with that which he bore for you? Can you, sinners, say, that you are severely dealt with, when you see the Holy One of Israel bowing down his adorable head under the weight of your iniquities. You do not want for examples to encourage you in the painful but glorious conflict. The most distinguished favourites of heaven walked in the way of the cross. They sowed in tears, and they reaped in joy. If you trace their history from the beginning of the world down to the present times, you will find them beset with difficulties and troubles, supported by the divine grace under hardships and persecutions, and animated by the prospect of that crown of glory which was reserved for them at the end of their course. If you expect, Christians, to share in their happiness, you must maintain your title to it as they have done. Offer your troubles and afflictions to your heavenly Father, as an atonement for your

your offences. If you improve them to advantage, they are features which form your resemblance with Jesus Christ, the pledges of immortal bliss, and your titles to glory. When your bodies will moulder into dust, they will leave in your ashes seeds of immortality.

O divine Saviour, who though innocent and spotless, wast pleased to suffer so much for our instruction, and for the expiation of our offences, teach us sinners, who are born to suffer, what our corrupt nature is so unwilling to learn. Thou art the way, the truth, and the life. We cannot go astray, while we follow thy steps, enable us to triumph over the weakness of nature and to go on cheerfully in the way thou hast marked out for us. Thou hast said, O Lord, if we share in thy sufferings, we shall share in thy glory. May our sufferings united to thine produce fruits of eternal life. May they qualify us for beholding thee face to face, seated at the right hand of thy heavenly Father, in that kingdom of everlasting bliss, which thou hast opened and purchased for us by thy sufferings. Amen.

S E R M O N X V .

ON THE FEAST OF PENTECOST.

*Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created;
and thou shalt renew the face of the earth. Psalm*
103. 20.

THUS spoke the royal Prophet, in a transport of admiration and thanksgiving: from a display of the wonders of the divine Providence in creating and governing the universe, his soul takes fire, and breathes sentiments of the purest and most animated devotion. He then raises his thoughts above this material world, to contemplate a new creation, a new spiritual world, the lustre of which, though invisible to carnal eyes is most glorious in the sight of heaven. On this day, the prophecy is accomplished; the earth is enriched with a profusion of graces and blessings; the face of the world is changed, a new people are created who adore their God in spirit and in truth. Yes, Christians, on this day, we commemorate the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, the promulgation of the new law, and the establishment

tablishment of the Church of Christ. How many wonders are comprized in this mystery! O my God, what is man, that thou shouldst be so mindful of him, we see the Three Persons of the adorable Trinity powerfully exerting themselves in our favour? The Father forms the plan of the redemption of the world; the Son seals the new covenant with his blood; the Holy Ghost completes the work, and infuses a soul into the mystical body of Christ. The Church, therefore, on this day celebrates her own nativity; the feasts of the saints, whom we honour as the chosen friends of God, shine but with borrowed rays from the glorious solemnity. To it we are indebted for the heroic fortitude of martyrs, the zeal and sanctity of confessors, the purity of virgins, for all the treasures of grace with which the Almighty adorned their happy souls, for all the treasures of glory with which he has crowned them. To it we owe the many privileges and advantages we enjoy in the Church, and that state of never ending bliss we expect to enjoy in the heavenly Jerusalem. Glory then be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, to the Father who hath created us, to the Son who hath redeemed us, to the Holy Ghost who hath sanctified us. How bountiful is our God of his blessings to us! He hath so loved us, as to give up his only Son for us. He hath so loved us, as to bestow on us, the Holy Ghost, and pour him forth upon all flesh. Oh, Christians, can we be insensible to so much goodness? Shall not the love of our God for us kindle in our souls the fire of the divine love? Let us therefore on this day open our hearts to receive the heavenly Guest, who knocks at the door, and waits for admittance. Behold the bridegroom cometh, let us go forth to meet him.

Observe, Christians, that we do not merely commemorate a mystery which is past, but a mystery which

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which always subsists in the Church, and is renewed in the souls of the faithful to the end of time. It is true; the Holy Ghost does not descend visibly on us, as he did on the Apostles, nor does he strike our eyes with the same signs and wonders, which accompanied his descent on them; but he descends invisibly on our souls, and fills them with his most precious interior gifts. The sacred fountain was opened at Pentecost on the Apostles, but it continues still to flow. The miraculous powers conferred on them, the outward gifts bestowed on the first believers were necessary at that time for the propagation of the Christian religion. But instead of them, the sanctifying spirit confers grace and all spiritual benefits on those to whom he now communicates himself. These are blessings which are necessary for all and at all times. They are ascribed to him in a special manner as the fountain of grace, and the eternal subsisting love of the Father and the Son. We, therefore, on this day celebrate the triumph of the Holy Ghost: For he has triumphed over the world. In these last words is comprized the substance of the following discourse. In the first part I shall endeavour to lay before you the change wrought on the Apostles by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and also the change wrought by the Apostles on the whole world: in the second part, the change we may expect to be wrought in our hearts by the same divine spirit, if we be properly disposed to receive him.

O sanctifying Spirit, O fruitful source of all heavenly gifts it is not in the power of man to speak of thee, unless thou assist him. O invisible preacher, give me one of those tongues of fire which rested on the Apostles, that I may communicate to my hearers the fire of thy love. Enlighten my understanding, inflame my heart, that I may

I may know and feel the wonders wrought by thy victorious grace. Come, O Father of the poor, omnipotent physician and restorer of our souls, purifier and reformer of our hearts, come, and take up thy abode among us. And thou O blessed Virgin, O chaste spouse of this divine Spirit, who overshadowed thee when thou conceivedst the Redeemer of the world, we humbly implore thy intercession. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

The change wrought on the Apostles will appear before us in a striking point of view, if we consider, what they were before the descent of the Holy Ghost, and what they were after it. We shall find, that they were ignorant of many essential truths, that they were wedded to many passions and imperfections. It was therefore necessary, that their minds should be enlightened, and their hearts reformed. Be not alarmed, Christians, if I should mention the imperfections to which the Apostles were subject during a part of their mortal lives. Were not these imperfections the matter of their triumph or rather of the triumph of the Holy Ghost? It is true; they were bred in the school of Jesus Christ; they enjoyed his heavenly conversation, they heard from his sacred lips the sublime truths of Christian morality; what was proposed to others in parables, they had explained to them in the clearest manner. At the same time they were totally unacquainted with the nature and design of his ministry. He repeatedly assured them, that his kingdom was not of this world, and yet they vainly fancied that he would raise the kingdom of Israel to the highest pitch of glory; subdue nations, and establish a temporal dominion. For such were the popular prejudices of the Jews who painted their Messiah

by the gaudy colours of their own pride. How often did he speak to them of the bloody baptism which he was to undergo; did he not enter into a detail of the circumstances thereof: The Son of Man, says he, is going up to Jerusalem to fall into the hands of his enemies, to be scourged and crucified. Peter is shocked at the idea of his Master's suffering such indignities. Our Saviour severely rebukes him, and declares, that he is a subject of scandal to him. Could he have foretold any thing more clearly than he did his resurrection? Did he not expressly tell the Apostles, he would rise again on the third day? Notwithstanding so many positive assurances, which they had from the mouth of Truth itself; immediately after their Master's death, the Disciples were in the greatest consternation, as if all their hopes were blasted for ever. One would imagine, that their faith expired with him on the cross, and was buried in his grave. He rises according to his promise, and he finds them incredulous to the last degree; this remarkable fact cannot gain their assent, till they are overpowered by evidence; one of them must feel the prints of the nails in his sacred hands and feet, and then he is forced to cry out: My Lord and my God. Our Saviour often complained of their dulness of apprehension, he told them, that he had many things to say to them, which they could not bear at that time. How much then did they stand in need of the lessons, of the Holy Ghost, who was appointed to be their teacher and comforter? But thanks to this divine Spirit, what a glorious prospect opens to our view.

How great, how wonderful is the change! Twelve poor fishermen who knew nothing above their nets and their boats, are now masters of the most sublime of all sciences, they are enlightened with a clear knowledge of heavenly truths, they

they penetrate the awful obscurity of the Scriptures, discover the meaning of the ancient prophecies, apply the passages relative to the Saviour of the world, with an admirable discernment; in an instant they are qualified to be the Apostles of Jesus Christ, the founders of our holy faith and the Oracles of the world. Oh, Christians, what an inundation of light must have poured in upon them, when the noonday Sun of heaven shot his brightest rays into their minds? They speak the languages of the different nations assembled at Jerusalem; they unfold the mysteries of the Christian religion; they announce the wonders of God with a divine eloquence, with a strength of reasoning which nothing could resist. St. Peter, by his first sermon, converts three thousand; and five thousand by a second. His words were the words of the Holy Ghost, who enlightened the minds of the Apostles, and strengthened their hearts.

Hitherto they were subject to many weaknesses. Our Saviour represented to them, that he would establish a new order in his kingdom, that to obtain the highest rank in it, they should here choose the lowest places, that in it humility was the only path which lead to greatness. How many lessons did he give them of charity, forgiveness of injuries, love of sufferings and contempt of the world? But their hearts were not prepared to receive these heavenly truths; blinded by worldly desires, they were strangers to the spirit of their meek and humble Saviour; they did not comprehend what was said to them. Accordingly we find, that they disputed for preeminence; they renewed their disputes on the eve of our Saviour's passion. When a city of the Samaritans refused to receive him, did they not wish, that he should command them to draw down fire from heaven to consume the offenders. How averse they were from sufferings,

erings, how timid and pusillanimous appears from
 their conduct towards their Lord and Master,
 when he was in the hands of his enemies. Peter
 notwithstanding his professions of attachment,
 denies him, the rest abandon him; the shepherd
 is struck, and the sheep are dispersed. But O
 happy change! as soon as the Holy Ghost sheds
 his beams on them, their thoughts and desires
 are spiritual and heavenly: The fire of the di-
 vine Love has consumed the dross of their earthly
 affections. They dispise riches and honours:
 they are dead to the world, dead to themselves;
 sufferings and humiliations, are their delight.
 They quit the place of their retirement, and make
 the streets of Jerusalem resound with the name of
 Jesus risen from the dead. They face the Jews
 with an undaunted courage, which no torments,
 or even death itself can shake. They charge
 them with the most enormous crime, that could
 be committed under heaven: He whom you have
 crucified is your God, he whom you have put to
 death, is the author of life: but know that he
 is now triumphant from the grave. We are wit-
 nesses thereof, we have seen him living: we
 cannot but announce to you what we have heard
 and seen. And where do they speak in this ex-
 traordinary manner? In a place, where they
 might have seen the tribunals to which their
 Master had been cited, the judges who had con-
 demned him, the barbarous executioners who had
 crucified him, in a place, where they might have
 seen hands as yet stained with the blood of Je-
 sus. Were not these so many objects capable of
 striking them with terror? No, for now they
 are strangers to fear. In vain the synagogue pre-
 tends to impose silence on the witnesses of the re-
 surrection. Their answer is: We ought to obey
 God rather than men. They are scourged, and
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they rejoice that they are accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

This is thy work, O sanctifying spirit: Such is the power of thy victorious grace, weak and ignorant men thou hast made Apostles and martyrs of Jesus Christ, thou hast fully qualified them for the arduous task of the conversion of the world. O my God, thou hast sent forth thy Spirit, and thou hast created them, and thou hast renewed the face of the earth. You know, Christians, what darkness overspread all nations, before the descent of the Holy Ghost. The true God had but one temple in the world, and even there he was ill served. Every where else temples of idols were to be seen. Man, degraded man, fell prostrate before the work of his own hands, the beasts of the field, the vilest insects, the most abominable vices were objects of his adoration. They, who were dignified by the title of heroes, and were remarkable for their disorderly lives, were ranked among the number of the Gods, and prayers offered up to them on those very tombs, where the hand of death had written the mortality in characters never to be effaced. What a deluge of iniquity must have overflowed the earth, when vice was in a manner sanctified by the example of such monstrous divinities? You see then, Christians, what the Apostles have done. They are to overthrow the empire of idolatry which had established itself in the minds and hearts of men. For was it not the corruption of the heart, that gave birth to that absurd system which prevailed in the pagan world? The interior idols were to be destroyed, and then the exterior idols must fall to the ground. But what difficulties have they not to encounter? The eloquence of orators, the subtilty of philosophers, the craft of politicians, the power of the Cæsars, the prejudices of the Jews and Gen-

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files, hell and the world are against them. They on the other hand, are without arms, without riches, without worldly power, credit, influence or authority, they are destitute of all human resources. Who then could have made them victorious but the God of wonders, who chose the weak things of this world to confound the strong? How great, how rapid was the progress of that religion which shocked the pride of the passions? A few years after the death of Christ, St. Paul declares: That the faith was announced to the whole world. An early writer addressing himself to the Romans says: We are but of yesterday, and we have overspread your empire, your cities, your islands, your forts, towns and assemblies; your very armies, wards, companies, tribes, palace, senate, and forum swarm with Christians. We have left nothing but your temples to yourselves. Here the hand of God visibly appears: a new creation rises to my view; I see a heavenly light shine on those, who were seated in darkness and in the shades of death: I see a Christian world raised on the ruins of Idolatry; I see a Church formed on earth which resembles the heavenly Jerusalem. How powerful is the operation of the divine Spirit! how fruitful in wonders! Let us beseech him on this day of his triumph to communicate to us his choicest blessings. He who has wrought so great a change in the Apostles, and in the whole world, is both able and willing to work a total change and reformation in our hearts.

THE SECOND PART.

It is a point of faith, that without the divine assistance we can do nothing available to salvation. All the operations of grace are ascribed in special manner to the Holy Ghost. In him therefore

therefore as Christians, we live, move, and have our existence; without him we are spiritually dead. Now, at your baptism you have received the first fruits of the Holy Ghost, he has thus favoured you with his precious gifts: but have you not by mortal sin repeatedly banished him from those souls in which he chose to dwell? Have you not grieved and insulted the holy Spirit that was in you? In this situation you are like those dried bones shewn to the prophet Ezechiel, until God shall say to you: Behold, I will send spirit or life into you, and you shall live. As the universe at its first creation was a rude and shapeless mass, till the Holy Ghost being born upon the waters of the abyss animated all its parts, so are our souls lifeless, till the divine Spirit is infused into them. As he produced the beautiful and regularly disposed world out of darkness and confusion, so he must shed his enlightening beams on our minds, to produce in us a new creation of virtue, bring forth light out of darkness, and dissipate our errors, and the prejudices of our passions by the rays of truth. He enlightens the mind and reforms the heart. He convinces the understanding of the truths of Christianity, and powerfully engages the will to practice them. Now, Christians, if the Holy Ghost has taken possession of your souls, where are the fruits of his divine presence? He is a Spirit of wisdom; but your lives are one continued round of disorders and irregularities, which even worldly prudence would condemn. He is a Spirit of charity; but your hearts are fraught with envy, hatred and malice, and your tongues dipt in gall to blacken the reputation of your neighbours. He is a Spirit of meekness, and you are continually agitated by the storms, which a peevish, fretful, discontented temper raises in your breasts. He is a Spirit of piety, but you are strangers to piety, and you prove it to the world, by a shame-

ful neglect of the most solemn duties prescribed by your holy religion. He is a Spirit of sanctity, and your lives are a palpable contradiction to the sanctity of your profession. But you will tell me, that you are not destined to be Apostles, that you cannot pretend to the same inundation of graces, which was poured on them. I will allow that the extraordinary gifts conferred on them, are not necessary for you. For instance, it is not necessary, that you should have the gift of tongues, or the power of raising the dead to life and commanding the infernal spirits. But the gifts of the Holy Ghost which tend to the salvation of your souls are necessary for you. These gifts he wishes to impart to you; but you are not disposed to receive them. Why do you not send up to heaven your fervent prayers to draw them down upon you? The Spirit of God delights to be with the children of men; let it be your delight to be with him, and you shall not be separated from him.

The primitive Christians were not destined to be Apostles, accordingly the Holy Ghost did not make them Apostles; but he made them saints. They lived in the world, but they were perfectly disengaged from it; they formed an interior solitude within their hearts where they kept up a holy intercourse with their God; they laid down their perishable riches at the feet of the Apostles for the relief of their distressed brethren, and thereby laid up for themselves never failing treasures in heaven. United by the bonds of charity, they formed but one heart and one soul, prayer and contemplation were their delight. Their extraordinary fervour and devotion qualified them for a daily participation of the sacred mysteries; they were dead to the world, dead to themselves. Christians, you adore the same God; you aspire to the same happiness; you believe as they

they believed, but you live not as they lived: and how is this to be accounted for? You suffer your hearts to be filled with another spirit, which is that of the world; and you know, that light is not more opposite to darkness, than the spirit of God is to the Spirit of the world. Yes, our blessed Saviour, speaking of the promised Comforter, says: He is the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive. The maxims, dispositions, and spirit of the world are such as he condemns. The worldling therefore entertains the enemy of God, and this enemy must be dislodged, before the heavenly Spouse can take possession of his heart; for any irregular attachment is injurious to him; he is a jealous God, he will admit no rival in your affections. You must therefore empty the vessels of your hearts of the infected waters of the world, before you can drink of those pure streams issuing from the throne of God and the Lamb, which become in the souls of the elect, a source of living water springing to eternal life.

What an extraordinary purity of heart was required in the Apostles, that they might be disposed to receive the Holy Ghost. The visible presence of the Redeemer was to be removed from them, because they found a sensible comfort in their attachment to it. There was something carnal in their affection, and this was an obstacle to the intimate communications of the Spirit of purity. What, says St. Bernard, is it possible, that the presence of Jesus Christ should be incompatible with the visit of the Comforter? Could not the Holy Ghost dwell together with that flesh of the Saviour of men, which he had himself formed in the womb of the blessed Virgin? What is the meaning of these words; If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you. It is, as if he had said: If the presence of my flesh be not taken from before your

eyes,

eyes, your minds which are wedded to it, will not be able to contain the plenitude of divine grace, nor your hearts to possess it. Now, Christians, if the Apostles on account of their attachment to so pure an object as the humanity of Christ, could not be replenished with the Holy Ghost, till that sensible sacred object was removed, how can you, wedded to an unclean body, and your hearts filled with impure thoughts and desires, pretend to receive the Author of all purity, if you do not first endeavour to renounce yourselves, and crucify your sensual appetites? What then shall become of those profligate sinners, who first give loose reins to every inordinate passion, wallow in the mire of debauchery and intemperance, defile themselves with heastly lusts, and glory in their own shame? How can the Holy Ghost take up his abode among them, who, instead of being his temples, are so many dens of unclean spirits. No; wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin. Let us not be deceived; God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also he shall reap. He that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh, shall reap corruption. Do not imagine, Christians, that the vices I have just pointed out to you are the only ones that will banish the Holy Ghost from your hearts. No; there are many others, though not of so gross or flagrant a nature, will exclude you from the benefit of the divine influence. If you mean to be enriched with the treasures of his grace, you must give yourselves up to him without reserve. How many half-Christians may be found, who form plans of conversion which they never carry into execution, whom the least difficulty staggers, the most trifling temptation overcomes; they are ever fluctuating between heaven and earth, attracted on the one hand by divine grace, on the other held back by their own weakness? The impression made on them by religious

gious truths are like the faint traces of a dream; their whole lives bespeak a deadly langour, a cold indifference, in regard to their salvation. Instead of promoting the interests of virtue and piety in their families, or in the circle of their friends and acquaintances, their example has a dangerous influence, for they plainly shew, that they have not a spark of zeal for the honour and glory of their God. Can it be supposed, that the Holy Ghost resides in their hearts? No; if he did, the fruits of his divine presence would appear in their lives. How unhappy then must they be, of whom it may be said, that the Spirit of God is not in them!

When we take a view of the many disorders which prevail in the Christian world, we will be apt to conclude, that if the Holy Ghost were to descend again he should find as much to reform now, as he did then. O my God, what is man, that thou shouldst be so mindful of him, that thou shouldst take so much pains to ensure his everlasting happiness! We see the Three Persons of the adorable Trinity powerfully exerting themselves in our favour. Can you point out a single vice practised by idolatry, that is not practised to this very day by those who style themselves Christians. Come then, O Holy Ghost, and create a new world, this second triumph of thy grace will be as glorious as the first. Christians, how desperate soever your wounds may be, your heavenly Physician is able to restore you to perfect health. Impressed with a sense of your miseries, lay them at the foot of the throne of grace, and look up to him who can comfort and relieve you.

Thou art infinitely compassionate, O true Comforter of souls, which thou hast created. Behold now, in our souls, objects fit for the exercise of thy goodness. Our hearts thou hast framed out of nothing, thou descendedst from heaven to purify them. They are defiled: let the sight of our distresses

distresses move thee to have mercy on us. We conjure thee to heal and restore thy own favourite work. With the most sincere sorrow and detestation, we confess our baseness and ingratitude. We consecrate ourselves for evermore to thy holy service. Subdue all our affections to the empire of thy love, support and strengthen our weakness, sanctify our souls and bodies with all their powers and senses, replenish us with every grace, every blessing, and reign in us without control. May the gift of perseverance crown all thy other gifts; this will insure to us a place in that glorious kingdom, where thou displayest the fullness of thy power and majesty for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N X V I .

ON CONFIDENCE IN THE MERCY OF GOD.

For the Third Sunday after Pentecost.

There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety nine just, who need not penance. Luke xv. 7,

THE truth conveyed to us in the words of my text is of a consoling nature. It holds out encouragement to the greatest sinners to return to their God, and repair the disorders of their lives by a sincere and solid repentance. From the passage before us, we may learn how different the spirit of our Saviour was from that of the proud and haughty Pharisees. These uncharitable zealots entertained a high opinion of their imaginary excellence, and looked down on the rest of men as far beneath them. Instead of endeavouring to reclaim sinners, they kept them at a stern distance, and treated them with the utmost contempt. But our Saviour conversed familiarly with sinners, eat and drank with them, and

and received them with open arms on their repentance.

The goodness and condescension of the man God is a subject of scandal to the Jewish-doctors, who take occasion from thence to discredit him among the people, and represent him in an odious light, as the friend and companion of publicans, and sinners. He condemns their excessive rigour, and displays before them the goodness of the divine mercy. He proposes to them a parable, the usual mode of conveying instruction in the Eastern countries. What man is there of you, says he, that hath an hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, doth he not lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing; and coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them. Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep, that was lost? I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety nine just, who need not penance. Here we have a striking and beautiful picture of that infinite goodness, which the Almighty displays in favour of his sinful creatures. He seeks the sinner in the midst of his wanderings, makes him hear his voice and recalls him from the paths of perdition, to the paths of peace and happiness. Another parable occurs in the same place, which exhibits the Father of mercies in the same amiable and engaging light. It is that of the prodigal son, who from a riotous and disorderly course of life, returns to a sense of his duty, and is received by his Father with every mark of joy, tenderness and affection. How pleasing must it be to the Christian soul to contemplate the mercies of God, who never forgets that we are the work of his hands, though we make ourselves his

his enemies, and impiously rebel against him. It is necessary to propose to you every motive that may induce you to secure the friendship of God, and your everlasting happiness. I know of none that ought to have more weight with you, than the consideration of the divine goodness. We are not slaves; we have received hearts susceptible of the most noble and exalted sentiments. It is not enough, O my God, that we fear thee, we must also love thee. Christians, open your hearts to the salutary impressions which the tender mercies of your heavenly Father will make upon them. The God, who died for you, is both able and willing to heal the wounds of your souls; he conjures you to return to him, and holds out his arms to receive you. Is not this enough to raise your drooping spirits, and animate your confidence? At the same time we must take care not to carry our pretensions too far, nor exceed the limits of a rational and well grounded confidence. In our present state, it is necessary, that hope and fear should act alternately as checks and balances on each other. We must hope, lest we despair; we must fear, lest we presume. Thus we shall steer in a safe and middle course through the dangerous navigation of life, and happily arrive at the haven of bliss. From what has been said, Christians, you are already acquainted with the design and tendency of the following discourse. I shall reduce it into two parts: That nothing is more agreeable to reason and religion, than confidence in the divine mercy, will be the subject of the first part: and nothing is more contrary to reason and religion than presumption, will be the subject of the second.

O God of mercy, God of goodness, may we never forget thy gracious promises in favour of those who sincerely repent. May they, who have strayed from thee, O Shepherd of our souls, attracted by the goodness of thy mercy, hear thy voice, and

return

return to the fold. May we cheerfully accept of the terms, on which pardon and forgiveness are held out to us. Grant us grace, O my God, to avoid the extremes, despair and presumption, to hope in thy mercy, while we fear thy justice, and to fear thy justice, while we hope in thy mercy. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, whom the church justly styles the mother of mercy, and the refuge of sinners. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

To hope in God is the indispensable obligation of all Christians. It is hope that supports the just in his virtuous exertions, that animates him to redouble his fervour, and advance every day more and more in the ways of perfection. Cheerful by the prospect of a glorious immortality, he thinks nothing of the toils and labours he undertakes to purchase the crown that is prepared for him. Convinced, that the master he serves is merciful and generous beyond measure, he abounds in good works, increases his merits, and makes rapid progress towards his heavenly country. Hope is also necessary for the sinner; you must always, that it is necessary for him to rise from the unhappy state he is in, and be reconciled to his offended God. Will he obtain so great a blessing unless he ask it? Will he ask it if he has no hopes of obtaining it? If you dishearten him, if you crush his hopes, if you tell him, that it is in vain for him to implore pardon and forgiveness, that the door of the divine mercy is for ever shut against him, what will be the consequence? He will say: O Lord, I am a lost man, I have nothing to expect from thee. What hinders me then from indulging myself as much as I please, giving full scope to my passions, and living without restraint. This is the

the language of despair, a language which reason disavows, and religion condemns as injurious to the infinite goodness of that God, who wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. On the other hand, if you throw open the door of the divine mercy to the sinner, and at the same time propose to him the terms on which he is to expect pardon and forgiveness, you convince him, that his conversion, however difficult it may be, is still possible, that nothing more is required of him than a strenuous effort, seconded by the divine assistance, which will never be wanting to him. He is a sick man, he stands in need of powerful and efficacious remedies; you point them out to him, you promise him a complete cure, if he consent to make use of them. Can any thing be more rational? Surely this is not to encourage sin: no; this, indeed, would be the case, were you to hold out to him an absolute, unconditional forgiveness, independant of any dispositions on his part. But when you insist on a sincere and solid repentance, there can be no danger; for such a repentance far from encouraging sin, effectually destroys it.

This mode of proceeding with regard to sinners is perfectly agreeable to reason; it is also agreeable to the maxims established in every part of the sacred writings, and more particularly in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How often are we assured, that the Almighty forgets the iniquities of the sinner who returns to him by a sincere conversion, that he casts them behind his back, buries them in the bottom of the sea, and makes him white as snow. How many instances to prove, that these gracious declarations have been verified? David humbly confesses his guilt, he declares that he has sinned before the Lord, and his sin is no more; he is a Saint, a Prophet, a man according to God's own heart. Manasses in chains adores his God, who

he had highly offended by a life of impiety and disorder: feeling the full weight of the divine vengeance, he looks up for relief to the hand that strikes him; he pours forth his soul in penitential tears; his prayer is heard; he is restored to his crown, and to favour with his God. In the law of grace every encouragement is held out to repenting sinners. Come to me, says our blessed Saviour, all you that labour, and are heavy laden and I will refresh you. The tears he shed over the unhappy Jerusalem, his earnest desire that all be saved, and that none perish, his pressing invitations to us all to take up his yoke and follow him, that we may find rest to our souls, are so many striking proofs of his tender mercy, and of his boundless love. Follow him from the first moment of his mortal life to his death on the cross, do not all his words and actions declare, that he came to save the world, and not to judge it? What means his name of Saviour, his blood scarce formed in his veins which he sheds on the day of his circumcision, what mean his toils and fatigues, his preaching, his miracles. Do they not all proclaim this consoling truth, that he came into the world to save sinners? Observe with what goodness and condescension he receives the penitent Magdalen: she wipes his feet with the hair of her head, and bathes them with her tears; he declares to her, that many sins were forgiven her, because she loved much. He brings salvation into the house of Zaccheus the publican. With all the anxiety of the shepherd mentioned in the Gospel; he goes in quest of the Samaritan woman, who had been for years a slave to sin, opens her eyes to the disorders of her life, and saves her from the brink of destruction. If, after all that has been said, the least doubt should remain on your minds of the mercy of your God, of his readiness to pardon your offences, go to mount Calvary, and there place yourselves at the

foot of the cross. What do you see? You see your God expiring, and heaving his last sighs to plead the cause of his crucifiers. You see his head inclined to bless you, his side open to receive your blood trickling down apace to wash away your iniquities; you see how his burning thirst of your salvation consumes him. Now, I believe, you are convinced, that Jesus Christ came to save the world, and not to judge it. This is a truth sealed with his blood in characters never to be effaced. Here, Christians, let us hold firm: our hopes cannot rest on a more solid foundation; for at the foot of the cross we may appear with confidence. If we see there a pure virgin, a beloved disciple, we see also a penitent Magdalen. O my God, how powerful do the rays of thy goodness and mercy shine forth from the cross to cheer the hearts of thy weak and desponding creatures. Can the sinner say, that he is excluded from the benefit of the redemption? If he does, the Gospel will condemn him. If this were the case, what would be the meaning of the words of St. Paul: Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of the faithful, he died for them all, and as by the sin of the first Adam they all died, so by the death of the second Adam they are all redeemed.

O glorious death, source of life to a sinful world. To convince the sinner of the infinite mercy of his God, it is not necessary to run through the whole of the Sacred Writings, I need but appeal to his own experience. His very existence is a proof of it. When first he dared to offend the most High, and transgress against his laws, he might, without any injustice, have been plunged in everlasting perdition. The infinite purity and sanctity of God seemed to require, that he should totally withdraw himself from a soul defiled with guilt. He deserved to die, and why does he live? Justice cried out, cut down the barren tree, why does it encumber the

the ground to no purpose, pluck it up from the
every roots, let it be the fuel of avenging flames.
No, no; says mercy, it may flourish and bear fruit
in a better season. Thus mercy disarmed justice.
Not satisfied patiently to wait for the sinner's re-
turn, the Almighty goes in pursuit of him; he so-
licitly him by his grace, by his holy inspirations;
he mingles a salutary bitterness with his unlawful
pleasures, he makes him feel the weight of those
galling chains, in which sinful habits have bound
his heart, he invites him to taste the sweets of his
friendship, and of that true liberty which consists
in not gratifying the passions, but in regulating
and subduing them. How often does the sinner
hear a voice whispering to his soul: Return, O un-
dutiful child, return to your Father, who tenderly
loves you, who wishes to embrace you, and give
you every proof of his paternal affection? He will
celebrate a triumph on your return: He will say to
his heavenly court: Rejoice with me, for my son
was dead, and he is living, he was lost, and he is
found. There shall be joy before the angels of
God on one sinner that doth penance. Although
he be essentially happy in himself, one would ima-
gine he cannot be happy without you, so solici-
tous is he to promote your real happiness: and
will you not make him a suitable return for his
disinterested love? What does he require of you,
but that you throw yourself prostrate before the
throne of his mercy, which you had so long and
so ungratefully abused? A single sigh, that comes
from an heart bleeding with anguish, will not pass
unnoticed by him, one penitential tear will blot
out your guilt for ever. If all the thunderbolts
of heaven should be suspended over your head, and
the infernal abyss open under your feet, the very in-
stant you sincerely return to your God, the sentence
is reversed, you are restored to favour, and to all the
rights and privileges you had forfeited by sin.

But you will tell me, that when you consider how often, and how grievously, you have offended God, you are apt to be terrified; you are tempted to despair, and to say; that your sins are so great, as to exclude all hopes of pardon. Now, let me ask you: Can you be so weak as to imagine, that the number and enormity of your offences can set bounds to infinite goodness, or dry up the source of divine grace, that the treasure of iniquity, which you have unhappily heaped together for a series of years, can equal, much less exceed the inexhaustible treasures of infinite mercy? No; notwithstanding the sinner has carried the malice and corruption of his heart to the greatest height, God is still disposed to forgive him, if he sincerely repent. And is it not in the conversion of the greatest sinners that he displays the riches of his mercy? Where sin reigned without controul, there he wishes to shew the sovereign power of his victorious grace. Had you been but an ordinary sinner, the pardon he holds out had been less glorious to him: But because you have abused all your faculties to the dishonour of your great Benefactor, because you have distinguished yourself in the service of his enemy, therefore he singles you out as a fit object for the full exercise of his infinite goodness; he is ready to crown you with graces and blessings, to convince the world, that he is rich in mercy, and that it is by acts of mercy in particular, that he wishes to be known, and adored by all creatures. Will you then remain any longer a slave to sin? Are there not gifts enough in the divine Mercy to soften your heart, and triumph over it? In whom O my God shall I place my confidence, if not in thee. If the thought of my iniquities should weigh me down, the idea of thy mercy lifts me up again, and the hope of pardon encourages me

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to present my supplications before thee. 'Thou art my God, my Saviour, and my all.

O best of Fathers, thou hast given me thy Son, thy Son has given me his blood, his blood is a source of graces, and blessings, why then should I despond? No; I will hide myself in his precious wounds; there I shall find a safe retreat; not one will dare to drag me from thence; the sanctuary is too holy to be violated. Such, Christians, are the sentiments of a sinner, who sincerely wishes to return to his God. He knows his heavenly Father, who bore with him so long, when he was wallowing in the mire of sin, without scruple, without remorse, will not reject his repentance. He loved him, even when he was bent on his destruction; and now, that he has a sense of his danger, will he not favour his escape? Yes; he will lead him by the hand; he will smooth the way before him, and make him feel more real pleasure and satisfaction in his holy service, than ever he experienced in the unrestrained indulgence of his lawless desires. Such are the reviving prospects, which religion holds out to repenting sinners. A rational and well grounded confidence in the divine Mercy softens the rigours of their penitential course. But alas, such is our weakness, that we are apt to pervert the best principles, and carry them to a dangerous extreme. Many there are, who led astray by false notions of infinite goodness walk in the broad road of presumption, until they sleep in death and are lost for ever. To guard you against so pernicious an error, and preserve you from the dreadful consequences immediately flowing from it, I shall now proceed to prove, that nothing is more contrary to reason and religion than presumption.

THE SECOND PART.

What has been said, is enough to encourage the humble penitent, in whom the consciousness of his guilt, and the consideration of the infinite justice and sanctity of God, would be apt to raise dreadful alarms: But surely no encouragement ought to be held out to the presumptuous sinner, who abuses infinite goodness and mercy to his eternal ruin. That God is good, that he wishes not his destruction, that he is ever ready to receive him, that he has shewn mercy to thousands; this is his constant theme. He concludes, that he need not be in a hurry, that he may venture to live on as usual, and persist in his sinful courses. Thus presumption begets a false security, security begets impenitence, and impenitence ends in everlasting misery. That such a disposition cannot be reconciled to any principle of reason or religion, will appear evident from a just representation of it. Let a sinner of this stamp reflect a while, and open his eyes; the malice and ingratitude of his conduct will stare him in the face; he will see himself guilty of the most shocking profanation of the divine Goodness that the human heart can be capable of. You say, that God is good and gracious, that he constantly heaps new favours on you, and therefore you will continue to insult him, to wage open war against him, to abuse his favours and employ them against himself. Were you to treat an earthly benefactor in this manner, would you not pass for a man without principle, without feeling, would you not be despised and detested as a disgrace to human nature? No doubt, you would. How odious then must you appear in the sight of God, when you make him so ungrateful a return for all his blessings, when by your impiety

you dash them back in the face of heaven? You say, that God is merciful, that he is ready to receive you, whenever you repent, and therefore you will multiply your crimes, and put off your repentance to the last moment. Christian brother, beware of the consequences of so dangerous an illusion? Surely, this is not what God has a right to expect from you.

The essential property of infinite mercy is to abolish the reign of sin, but the use you make of it, is to encourage and support you in your sins. This attribute of the Divinity which invites you to repentance, is in your hands a pretext for impenitence. Thus, like those noxious and malignant plants, which convert the dew of heaven into poison, you pervert the most efficacious means of salvation to the utter ruin of your soul. Hear the sentence which St. Paul passes on you: Thinkest thou, O man, that dost these things, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God; or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long suffering? Knowest thou not, that the benignity of God leadeth thee to repentance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works? Thus the presumptuous sinner is condemned by the express testimony of holy Writ: every principal of religion militates against him. The goodness of God is infinite in its own nature, but it may be limited as to its effects. He is just as well as merciful: He will punish the wicked servant, and reward the good one. He grants us the means of attaining everlasting happiness, but he requires that we make use of them. If we do not, the fault lies at our own door, our perdition is from ourselves. In the ordinary course of

of things, his graces are proportioned to our dispositions to co-operation. If we mean to be favoured by his all-powerful aid, we must help ourselves. In vain does he enlighten our minds if we extinguish the divine light: in vain does he send us his grace, if we take no pains to make it fructify. Thus in the order of nature he commands showers to descend and fertilize the earth; he commands the sun by its vital heat to ripen the grain, but will this do without the care and labour of the husbandman. Our salvation then must be the effect of his grace and of our endeavours. It must proceed from him as the first cause of all that is good, and from ourselves, as secondary causes acting in concert with him, and employing the talents we have received to the best advantage. How blind then is the presumptuous sinner to his eternal interest? Grace is offered him; but he rejects it; he impiously resists it. Instead of cooperating with his God, he acts in direct opposition to him: he cuts himself off from the ordinary means, he has nothing but a miracle in the order of grace to depend on. And who has promised him such a miracle? What right has he to expect it? In vain then does he say, that God is merciful; he cannot be so to the impenitent. In vain does he value himself on his faith in a Redeemer; he excludes himself from the benefit of the redemption. Does he imagine, that an idle barren faith will ensure his salvation? No; says St. James, as the body is dead without the soul, so is faith dead without good works. You see then, how ill grounded his pretensions are, how ingenuous he is in deceiving himself. Indeed if the idea of infinite mercy, contribute to work a change in his heart, and a reformation in his conduct, this would lay the foundation of a rational confidence. But when this very confidence

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ation hardens him in his iniquity, and encourages him to add fresh insults to the old ones, on the presumption of his obtaining pardon: whenever he is pleased to apply for it, then I say, that the abuse of mercy must give way to the rigours of justice. All I have to wish for him, that a salutary fear may take possession of his heart, and powerfully engage him to avert the indignation of heaven, which like a torrent is ready to burst on his guilty head. How many are now victims to the divine vengeance, and exploring their sad fate in tears which will flow in vain for eternity; because they put off their repentance from day to day, and flattered themselves that the door of mercy would be ever open to them? But now alas they feel to their cost, that it is to insult and abuse infinite goodness. Let their misfortune be a caution to the presumptuous sinner. If he should be cut off in the midst of his sins, he must share in their misery, he must be consigned to those gloomy dreadful mansions, where not a ray of hope shall cheer his soul, where endless despair and a wretched immortality await him. Then all his delusive hopes shall be blasted for ever. The very heavens shall rise in judgment against him. Forty days are allowed the Ninivites to disarm the anger of heaven. They avail themselves of the favourable time: they fast and pray, they humble themselves in the sight of the Lord; the Lord appeased, and the sentence is reversed. But the presumptuous sinner rolls on for a series of years in the same round of vice and folly without repentance, without amendment, accumulating crimes and treasuring up wrath. How can he approach the throne of mercy, when he is obstinately bent on sin, when the abuse of mercy is the source of all his disorders? What a contrast between him and so many eminent saints, who

who were seized with an holy fear, whenever the awful idea of divine judgments presented itself to their minds? What shall I do, says holy Job when the Lord shall come to judge, or when he shall demand an account of me, what shall I answer for myself? Such were the sentiments of St. Jerom, St. Hilarian, and many other faithful servants of God. Buried in frightful solitudes where they spent their days in the exercise of mortification and penance, their bodies exhausted by fasting, their souls absorpt in contemplation, they tremble, when they reflect that they must appear before the searcher of hearts, from whom their most secret thoughts could not be concealed. Purified by the practice of every virtue, they do not think themselves pure or innocent enough to stand before him; they beseech him by his tender mercies to screen them from his wrath, and not to judge them according to the rigour of his justice. On the other hand, we see notorious sinners, who in the midst of a corrupt world, indulge themselves in all the vices that disgrace it, who give loose reins to their inordinate passions, whose lives are one continual round of dissipation and pleasure. Notwithstanding all this they are calm and undisturbed; fearing nothing from God's justice, and presuming on his mercy, they expect the grace of a happy death, of a happy eternity, with as great a degree of certainty, as if they were fully entitled to these incomparable blessings. How different are the two classes of men I have here described. But have they not the same master to serve, the same God to judge them, the same law, which they are to be judged, that law, which holds out eternal rewards or punishments according to the merit, or demerit of each individual? Now from their different conduct in life may we not reasonably conclude, that a God

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finite justice, will crown the former with his choicest blessings, and make the latter feel the full weight of his vengeance?

I hope, Christians, you are convinced, that presumption leads to endless ruin, and has plunged innumerable souls into hell. Forbid it, heaven, that this should be the case of any one among us: that mere wishes will not avail. Do not imagine, that the Almighty will do every thing for you, while you do nothing for yourselves. No; such idle imaginations have neither reason nor religion to support them. Follow the advice of the Apostles, who conjures you to work out your salvation in fear and trembling. This salutary fear, will keep you in a state of constant vigilance, and be your most sure and surest defence. Remember that the happiness you expect to enjoy is a prize to be adjudged to the conqueror, a reward prepared for those who take pains to deserve it. It is not enough to wish for it, you must resolutely contend for the prize. It is not every one, says our blessed Saviour, that cries out, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. His will is, that you no longer abuse his infinite goodness, but bring it to a proper account. Whenever you hear in the interior of your heart inviting you to repentance, answer the heavenly call; awake from the sleep of death and rise to life. May you never sleep in death: May you persevere in serving God with fear and confidence, and obtain the crown of immortality prepared for those who fight and conquer. Amen.

S E R M O N X V I I .

ON INGRATITUDE TO GOD

For the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

*There is no one found to return and give glory to God
but this stranger. Luke, xvii. 18.*

THIS is a just complaint our Saviour makes against persons who seemed to be insensible of the benefit he had conferred on them. The gospel tells us, that he was entering into a certain town, there met him ten lepers who stood at a distance, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Jesus have mercy on us! Our Saviour is touched with compassion; he is determined to relieve them, and accordingly orders them to shew themselves to the priests, as the law of Moses directed. They go, and behold! while they are on the way, the divine virtue operates in them, and they are cleansed. Observe, Christians, how they conduct themselves on this occasion. They are all cured, and only one of them returns to

the tribute of gratitude, to the author of their cure. He who was meekness itself, cannot but take notice of this want of feeling, and thus makes the charge against them: Were there not ten made clean, and where are the nine? There is no one bound to return and give glory to God, but this stranger; for the Evangelist observes that the person who returned was a Samaritan. You would expect that as they all were equally favoured with the same benefit, they would join in expressing a grateful sense thereof; and you must allow that their great benefactor had a just right to complain of those who neglected so essential a duty.

But, Christians, have we not a share in their guilt? He daily showers down his blessings on you with fresh favours: he is the giver of all good gifts, and do we make him a suitable return? May not the same charge be made against yourselves? You are surrounded on all sides with marks of his love for you, and instead of being transported with gratitude, you are often so wretchedly insensible, that one would think you have neither hearts to love him, nor tongues to celebrate his praises. You do not even stop here; you dishonour him, as far as in you lies, by the abuse of his favours. Instead of making them serve to his greater honour and glory, you make them instruments of war against him. By your impiety, they are dashed back into the face of heaven and bring down a malediction on your heads. It is your interest to prevent a disorder of so alarming a nature from gaining ground in your hearts. For this purpose, I shall endeavour to lay before you, with the divine assistance, in the following discourse, the dangerous consequences of ingratitude to God for his benefits, and the many advantages that flow from the contrary virtue. In a word, nothing is more odious to God, than ingratitude. There is nothing more presumptuous to ourselves. This
shall

shall be the subject of the first part. On the other hand, nothing is more pleasing to God than gratitude towards him; nothing more profitable to ourselves: this will be the subject of the second part.

O Father of mercies! O never failing fountain of good! O thou! who openest thy right hand and fillest all living creatures with blessings! may we never forget the gracious dispensation of providence in our favour with regard to us. To thee O Lord, we stand indebted for all the advantages we possess: May we never provoke thee to withdraw thy favours from us. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, whose soul magnified thee, Lord, whose spirit exulted in God her Saviour, who favoured beyond all creatures, surpassed them also in gratitude to thee. Let us salute her, in the words of the angel, saying, *Hail Mary*.

THE FIRST PART.

Before we proceed, Christians, it is necessary to observe, that I mean not to speak here of that general ingratitude which accompanies every sin we commit, and is an aggravating circumstance thereof; but of that vice of ingratitude in particular which consists in not making a proper acknowledgment to God for his benefits, in totally forgetting them, or in criminally abusing them to the dishonour of the great benefactor. How odious to God this ingratitude is, reason enlightened by revelation plainly shews. If you should confer many obligations on another, and that the person obliged should disregard you and your benefits, and what is worse, should use all means to injure and molest you; would you not be apt to look on a man of this stamp, as a man void of all sentiments, unworthy of your friendship, and totally unfit for society; for if he had no other return to make

ake, you would expect that of a grateful heart ;
that that he should return evil for good, this you
consider as a crime of the blackest die. .

In this odious light, ingratitude has been always
held, when it regards man and man. What then
must it be, when it regards the creature and the
creator ? When man distinguished by blessings,
forgets the bounteous hand from which they flow ;
when he tramples them under foot by making such
use of them, as is directly contrary to the end
which his Lord and Master had in view ? To set
the enormity of this vice before you in a clearer
light, it may not be amiss, to give you a short
etch, of the principal benefits conferred on you,
by your God : for, to enter into a particular detail
of them all, would be an endless task.

You know, that before the creation of this
world, God was supremely happy : but he was wil-
ling to communicate this happiness, and accord-
ingly he formed beings capable of rising to hap-
piness, and the enjoyment of himself. Our im-
mortal souls which are a portion of his divine
spirit, our bodies the work of his hands, the great
luminaries which enlighten us, the several species
of living creatures which contribute to our use
and convenience, in a word, nature, all nature,
proclaims how much he has done for man. But
we consider what he has done for us in the or-
der of grace, (or in other words) the spiritual
blessings imparted to us ; what a prospect opens to
our view ! Excluded from our original birthright
by the prevarication of our first parents, and ene-
mies of God, what would become of us, had he
not sent his only Son into the world, to bear the
weight of our iniquities, and rescue us from the
tyranny of Satan, under which we groaned ? From
the sufferings and death of the Man God, what a
effusion of graces issues forth ? The sacraments,
these channels of grace, some to raise us to a spi-
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ritual life, others to support and strengthen therein, all flow from this copious source, the blood of the crucified Jesus! Christians, how many, how unspeakable are these benefits. Must it not then be highly displeasing to our heavenly Father, that his infinite goodness should be repaid by ingratitude and insensibility? It certainly must. The light of reason, the voice of nature, our own feelings tell us so; and if we consult the sacred writings, we shall find the divine will already signified to us on that head.

We read in the book of Deuteronomy, that God ordered Moses to write a canticle for the children of Israel, which might serve to put them constantly in mind of the law he had given them; the rewards promised to the faithful observance thereof, and of the punishment denounced against the transgressors. In this canticle, (for seeing the repeated prevarications of this ungrateful people) he thus gives vent to his holy zeal and indignation, and reprimands them thus: Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is not he thy Father who hath created thee and made thee his peculiar possession and inheritance? Let us hear how he describes their ingratitude. Thou hast forsaken thy God, and thou hast forgotten thy Lord and Creator. But what is the punishment thereof? A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell. Christians, can any expressions be stronger than these? Can anything more forcibly convince us of the abhorrence which the Almighty conceives against the vice of ingratitude to him? We have it then from the mouth of truth itself, that the avenging fire kindled by the wrath of an angry God, is destined particularly for his ungrateful children, I mean those, who distinguished by his favours, refuse to pay him that tribute of gratitude which he so justly claims as his due.

I shall produce another passage of holy Writ to illustrate the same truth: Isaiah opens his prophecy by a charge, which God himself makes against his chosen people: Hear, O ye heavens! and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken: I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me: The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known me, and my people have been stupid of understanding. You observe, Christians, how he calls heaven and earth to witness; he might have charged them with many other crimes, but he dwells on that of ingratitude as the principal one, and the source of all the rest: He places them beneath the brute creation; for brute beasts often furnish us with many instances of attachment to those, who are attentive to supply their wants; and now if we take a view of this stiff-necked people, do we not behold the scourge of divine wrath hanging constantly over them? Wanderers throughout the world, without a king, without a chief, not even forming a national body, they seem to submit as lasting monuments of God's vengeance. And why all this? Because they were ungrateful. You know how far they carried this odious quality. Our Saviour was pleased to appear among them, to display before them, signs and wonders in confirmation of his heavenly doctrine: He heals the sick, the lame and the blind; he raises the dead to life; he scatters blessings as he passes among them; and yet, O monstrous ingratitude! they condemn the Author of life to an ignominious death, and imbrue their hands in the blood of their God! No wonder, then, if they are no longer treated as the chosen people; heaven visibly declares itself against them. And what have you, Christians, to expect, if you imitate their conduct? You were seated in darkness and in the shade of death, when the Lord was

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pleased

pleased to call you to his admirable light; to give you a more perfect law, the law of grace, a law abounding in means of salvation. But if you make not the proper use of these means, if you abuse them to your eternal ruin, if this be the general practice of Christians, now-a-days, will he not visit you in his wrath? Will he not hear the voice of your iniquities crying to him for speedy vengeance?

From what has been said, Christians, you may clearly infer, how displeasing the vice of ingratitude must be to your God; it is also pernicious to yourselves. Can there be a greater misfortune than that the bountiful hand of God should be withdrawn from his creatures? that the current of his graces should be stopped with regard to them? that the dew of his mercy should not descend upon them? And yet, this is the consequence of ingratitude to him, it cannot be otherwise. Ingratitude breaks off the communication which ought to subsist between the Almighty who confers his benefits and his creatures who receive them. As these benefits proceed from him, so ought they to be referred to him. To God alone is due the honour and glory arising from his gifts; but when instead of glory he meets with ingratitude, a wall of separation is raised between him and ungrateful man who is left to himself, and then you may judge what a forlorn situation he must be in. And is not an act of mercy in the great God, to withdraw his favours from those to whom an increase of them would be only an increase of guilt? Unhappy they who force their heavenly Father to forsake them. Persons supported by his grace have difficulties enough to encounter; they must be always on their guard against the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil; they must carefully watch the motions of their hearts, and work out their salvation in fear and trembling. What then will be

come of those, over whom their passions reign without control; and who, by a constant abuse of God's grace, have extinguished the love of God in their souls? Is it not to be dreaded, that they will be treated like the barren fig-tree mentioned in the Gospel, which was ordered to be cut down and cast into the fire? or, like the unprofitable servant, who, for not having turned his talent to some account, was condemned to outer darkness?

You perceive, Christians, that what I have just mentioned principally regards the abuse of spiritual benefits; but if you abuse temporal favours, do you think you shall go unpunished? Oh no! they who incur this guilt, often experience the judgments of God, even in this life, and entail a malediction on their unhappy descendants. But let me suppose that the wrath of God does not visit them in this sensible manner, is there not a day of reckoning to come on which they must give an account of their stewardship. You see then, Christians, how dreadful the consequences of ingratitude are, and how many expose themselves thereto. A man in the midst of ease and affluence forgets his God, and spends his time in dissipation and extravagance, while the poor man praises his Lord for the morsel of bread which he earns by the sweat of his brow. Another attributes his success in the world to his own good sense and cleverness, as if he had these gifts entirely from himself. Presumptuous man! what hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory, as if thou receivest it not?

There are others, (I mean persons of strong natural parts assisted by education) who confine their gratitude to their fellow-creatures, as if these were their only benefactors. It is true, some benefits may be received more immediately from the hands of men: but who has chosen these men as instruments of good? Who has given them the power

and the will to serve others? Is it not the Almighty? How many are constantly complaining of their situation, though they have no reason to complain. If they kept their minds to themselves, every one would think they were as happy as creatures can be in this life; and yet so it is, they are never easy: something is always amiss with them, and, if there were not real evils enough in the world, they bring in imaginary ones to supply their place. Would they not lay aside this pettish humour, the fretful disposition, if they considered how indulgent the great God is to them, and how many of their fellow-creatures are pining in misery and indigence, while they have at their command whatever they can reasonably desire? In a word, the whom providence crowns with her favours, are the most apt to slight and abuse them. Loaded with benefits, they forget their benefactor; the giver concealed from their view by the cloud of his own gifts; and where gratitude ought to shine forth, there ingratitude abounds. And can a just God see his choicest blessings trampled upon, and not be provoked against the offenders? No; he certainly will punish them; and you know how dreadful it is to fall into the hands of an angry God. But is there no way for them to avert his wrath? Yes, they may return to a proper sense of their duty and of the gratitude they owe him. As they before proved themselves ungrateful, let them now shew that they are animated with the contrary virtue, that of gratitude to him for his benefits, which will be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

Gratitude to God consists in acknowledging his blessings received from his hands, in returning him due thanks, and particularly in expressing a proper sense thereof by the whole tenour of our lives.

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How pleasing to them this virtue is, the light of reason plainly shews. A generous man who confers a favour on another, who is able to do him any service, is satisfied if the person obliged be sensible of the obligation; for this is the only return he could reasonably expect, and this alone he requires. You know, Christians, that the Almighty is entirely independent of his creatures; he is essentially happy in himself; he does not stand in need of us; but as we continually stand in need of him, he is continually heaping his benefits on us, and if we give him a grateful heart, all is well. It must be highly pleasing to him that his blessing should have the intended effect; and that his infinite love for us, which prompts him to do us good, should produce a return of love. In a word, take away this grateful disposition, and religion is laid aside; for religion principally consists in a soul's being penetrated with a sense of the divine goodness. This reasoning is supported strongly by the authority of holy Writ. In every part of the Old Testament the Almighty exhorts his people to keep up in their minds a grateful remembrance of his benefits. Their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, their miraculous passage through the Red Sea, their receiving the Law on Mount Sinai, their being fed with manna in the desert, are constantly held up to their view, that their hearts may be warmed into a sense of gratitude to the Author of these blessings. Was it not for this purpose, that God ordered Moses to set apart certain days to be kept every year as days of thanksgiving, on which sacrifices were to be offered, canticles sung, and other rites performed in honour of him, who was pleased to distinguish his chosen people by so many visible marks of his favour and protection? Moses expressly commands the parents to explain to their children the end for which these solemn festivals were instituted. When thy son, says he, shall ask thee

thee in time to come, saying, what mean these laws, these rites and ceremonies, which the Lord our God has commanded us? Thou shalt say unto him, we were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: and therefore the Lord has commanded us to observe these laws and ceremonies.

In the New Testament, gratitude to God is frequently recommended to us. The Apostle exhorts all Christians whatever they do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; giving thanks to God the Father through him, to give him thanks in all things, for that is the will of God in Christ Jesus; to offer up to God, continually a sacrifice of praise. Animated by the spirit of God the Church strongly inculcates to her children the necessity of this duty. For what purpose has she instituted the solemnities of Easter, Pentecost, Christmas, &c. but to keep their gratitude to God always alive, by refreshing in their minds, the remembrance of the signal blessings he has been pleased to bestow on the Christian world? What are the feasts of the Martyrs, Confessors, and other faithful servants of God, but days of thanksgiving to him for the treasures of grace with which he has enriched these happy souls, and for the glory with which he has crowned them? It appears then, Christians, from the sacred writings, and the constant practice of the Church, that the exercise of this virtue is highly pleasing to the Almighty. It is also profitable to ourselves. We find that the Saints were always remarkable for the practice of this virtue; for whenever the Patriarchs received any blessings from their divine Master, they immediately erected altars to him, and everlasting monuments of their gratitude. How is the heart of the royal Prophet inflamed with love and gratitude, when he declares, that he will never cease to sing the mercies of the Lord? In

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What rapturous strains does he invite his soul to celebrate the wonders of the divine goodness: bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all thy favours; who forgives all thy iniquities; who heals all thy disorders; who redeems thy life from destruction; who crowns thee with loving-kindness and tender mercy. These are the expressions of a saint who is all on fire and unable to contain the transports of his devotion. Animated with these sentiments, the saints of the new Law bless the Lord, even when they see nothing before them but sufferings and persecutions. From the midst of the flames which consume their mortal bodies, they raise their voice, and sing canticles of joy and thanksgiving to their God. It appears then, Christians, from the light of reason, from the sacred writings, from the constant practice of the Church, and the example of the saints, how pleasing to God, the virtue of gratitude is, it is also profitable to ourselves. Is it not a great advantage to be always in a friendship with our heavenly Father, to receive from him a constant profusion of blessings, and to be fitted every day more and more for that unspeakable happiness to which we all aspire? These are the natural effects of gratitude. When you confer benefits on a man who is grateful for them, who makes a proper use of them, and faithfully fulfils your intentions in bestowing them; is not this an encouragement to you, to continue your friendship to him, to support him as far as your abilities will allow, and to convince him of fresh services, that you are pleased with his conduct? If this be the case between man and man, with what complacency does not the Almighty who loves his children with an infinite love) see them turn to proper account every blessing they receive from his hands, and make them all so many steps to their everlasting happiness. Oh! with what

what satisfaction will he not reward the faithful servant who employs his talents so well, and enriches his heavenly grace a soul where it produces so much fruit? In a word, his earnest desire is to do us good; and he never ceases loading us with his favours, as long as he finds us properly disposed to receive them. Besides we may observe how pleasing the exercise of this virtue is, even when we practice it with regard to each other: how then must it raise and fill the soul with heavenly delight and exalt her into rapture, when employed on that bountiful Being from whom we have every thing we possess.

You are too well informed, Christians, to suppose, that the gratitude required of you consists merely in conceiving a lively sense of God's benefits for a few moments, and in making warm professions of these transitory feelings: No, there are no fine flowers, but where is the fruit? It consists then principally in a faithful correspondence with the divine grace, in a regular train of actions tending to the honour and glory of God, in a good life; for the good life of a Christian is the only perpetual thanksgiving. Let us then, Christians, beseech the Almighty, to add to the many blessings he has conferred on us, one more, that is, a lasting sense of his goodness, which may appear in the fruits of a sincere and solid piety; give a spiritual strength and vigour to all our actions, and render them, through the mercies of God, meritorious to eternal life. Unhappy they who follow a contrary course: in that awful moment, when they are to bid an eternal adieu to all earthly enjoyments, when death shall encompass them with all its terrors, when the world shall turn its back upon them, what an aggravation of misery must it be to revolve, in the bitterness of their souls, the years they have gone over, and to see nothing but a constant abuse of God's blessings! How different the situation

situation of the man who, while his body is hastening to dissolution, can support his soul with a reasonable confidence, that he has not abused the talents which his heavenly Father has entrusted to his care; that he has improved them to the best of his power, and endeavoured to maintain his title to a glorious immortality. Christians, may this be our happy lot; may our lives be such as to render death precious in the sight of the Lord. Then may we expect to appear with confidence before him, and to hear from his sacred mouth these reviving words: Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will get thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord. Amen.

S E R M O N X V I I I .

ON THE USE OF TIME.

For the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

While we have time, let us do good. Epistle of St.
Paul to the Galatians vi. 10.

IN these words, my dear Christians, is conveyed to us a truth universally allowed in speculation, but, I fear, very little attended to in practice. We all know, that time is the measure of our existence, that it is a sacred deposit entrusted to our care ; it is therefore of the utmost importance that we improve it to the best advantage, and make it answer the great and salutary purposes for which it is given us. If we reflect at all, we must be convinced, that the abuse of time is the source of all our evils. And is there any thing more common than this abuse ? How many throw it away in a thoughtless, inconsiderate manner, and invite every one to rob them of a part of it ? They seem to act on a supposition, that they have a right to dispose of it as they please, as if they were not accountable for the good or bad use they make of it.

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How many do not know what to do with it, and are therefore, every day of their lives, exerting all their ingenuity to kill the time, as fast as they can, and make the heavy burden sit as easy as possible on their shoulders? And is this a rational part for a Christian to act? Is it not a strange perversion of reason to imagine, that amusement, which at best ought to be but a temporary relaxation, can be made the chief business of life? Others doze away their hours in the lap of ease and indolence; they live for no one good or useful purpose; they are mere blanks in existence, and a burden to the earth. The whole history of their lives may be comprized in these few words, that they eat, drank, and slept; that they led the life of a brute. Is it possible, that beings destined for a glorious immortality should sink to such a state of meanness and degradation. But the most shocking abuse of time is to misapply it to the worst of purposes, to devote it to the service of iniquity, and make every day a witness to fresh crimes. And are there not sinners so unappetently industrious as not to let a moment slip unattended with some sinful thought, word, or action, who employ all their activity, all their exertions in forwarding their vicious pursuits, and purchasing everlasting misery? If they took but half the pains to secure their salvation, they would infallibly succeed; they would become eminent saints; they would qualify themselves for the highest degrees of glory in heaven. Your own experience will convince you, that there are many ways of misemploying time, and if you look abroad into the world, you will find, that the generality of mankind betray the most unaccountable folly in their mismanagement of it. But here our inconsistency appears in the strongest light. We are all complaining of the shortness of time; we say, that our days and hours steal away

away from us imperceptibly, that we have not time enough to carry into execution the plans we propose to ourselves. And yet, we act as if we had enough of it to throw away on idleness and vice: we do nothing, or at least we do nothing to the purpose. Now the rational conclusion to be drawn from the shortness of time is, that we ought to arrest the moments as they fly, and make them contribute to our future welfare. While the day rolls on, let us reflect that the night comes when no man can work. Where is the use in complaining of the shortness of our lives, when this consideration does not spur us on to redouble our efforts and labour with unwearied assiduity to make our election and vocation sure. We have time enough for every good purpose, if we make a proper use of it. On this our all depends: for the good or bad use of time terminates in nothing less than everlasting happiness or misery. I believe, my dear Christians, you are convinced, that no subject can be more important than that which I mean, with the divine assistance, to propose to your consideration in the following discourse. In the first part I shall endeavour to lay before you the value of time: in the second the manner in which it ought to be employed.

O Jesus, thou sovereign dispenser of times and moments, whose merciful hand measures out to us the days of our existence on earth, without thy assistance we can do nothing available to eternal life. Grant us grace so to employ this time of our trial and probation, that we may be able to render thee a satisfactory account, whenever thou shalt be pleased to demand it of us. May we never abuse it to our eternal ruin. May we consecrate it to thy honor and glory, and to the salvation of our souls. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, whose constant study it was, to improve the

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abundant treasures of grace, with which her soul was adorned, and to qualify herself for that eminent degree of glory, to which she is raised in heaven.
Hail Mary.

THE FIRST PART.

When our first parents transgressed the divine command, the punishment due to their disobedience was instant death. They deserved neither for themselves, nor for their posterity, that any time should be allowed them to expiate their guilt, and disarm the wrath of heaven. But thanks for ever to our gracious Redeemer, who interposed in their behalf, offered himself a victim for their sins and for the sins of the world, and nailed to his cross the hand-writing that was against them. His death and passion, which were to take place in the fulness of time, were from the very beginning of the world the source of grace and mercy, and thus was man reinstated in the rights he had forfeited. Adam and his guilty race, were favoured with an opportunity of washing away their crimes by the tears of repentance, if their lives were prolonged to enable them to comply with so indispensable an obligation, it is all to be attributed to the merits of Jesus Christ, who was to die in their place, and throw open the gates of heaven, which otherwise would have been shut against them for ever. Christians, what an idea must we form to ourselves of the value of time, when we reflect on the inestimable price that was paid for it. The time we now enjoy was purchased by the blood of God. What a powerful motive to employ it well, and not to lose a single moment. Not only, children of Adam have we forfeited our title to life; we have also forfeited it by our numberless and grievous offences. The Almighty without any injustice might have cut us off in the midst of

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of them, and plunged us into everlasting perdition. If his mercy has suspended the execution of this dreadful sentence, was it not with a view that we might atone for the abuse of the past time by filling the present with good works, which may bear fruit to all eternity? How senseless, how ungrateful must we be, if we make not the best use of it?

To give you a striking proof of the value of time, let me lead you in contemplation to the bright abodes of immortal bliss, where the souls of the elect exult in the full and undisturbed enjoyment of all that heaven can afford. If you ask me, what put them in possession of that happiness which shall never be taken from them, I will answer, it was the good use they made of their time; allowed them to secure their salvation. They considered themselves as strangers and sojourners here below; they knew that they had no lasting dwelling place on earth, heaven then was the centre of their expectations, the fixed point of rest to which their thoughts and actions were directed. They knew that they were like so many labourers hired to work in the vineyard of their heavenly Master; they laboured effectually; they laboured to the best purpose and now they enjoy the fruit of their labours. They lived much in a little space, more in a few years than others do in many, and now they live for ever. What a pleasure is it to them to look back on the days of their mortal pilgrimage, so profitably spent in taking precautions against the enemies of their souls; in practising good works, in faithfully acquitting themselves of the duties of the respective stations they were placed in. How sweet the recollection of time, so successfully employed in purchasing eternity of bliss. Let me now prevail on you to descend in spirit into those regions of woe where everlasting horror dwells, where the ene-

emies of God feel without intermission or abatement, the full weight of his wrath and vengeance, where they burn for endless ages without being consumed. If you ask me, what hurled them into this abyss of misery and despair, I will answer; it was the loss and the abuse of that precious time, which was given them for the purpose of saving their souls, but which they have perverted, to their ruin. With unavailing regret they looked back on the days and hours wasted in absolute idleness, in the neglect of every duty, or basely prostituted to criminal excesses, to the indulgence of every lawless, unwarrantable desire. With heart-felt sorrow, they call to mind the profanation of the days particularly consecrated to the service of the living God. Instead of sanctifying them, they devoted them to the service of Bacchus, of Venus, of all the other idols erected in their hearts by their headstrong and rebellious passions. What would they not give now, for one of those hours which we squander away so unprofitably? Oh, if their request could be granted, how eagerly would they improve it? What tears of bitter compunction would they shed? What sighs and groans would they send up to the throne of grace, to conjure the Father of mercies to look down with an eye of pity on them? But alas! it is too late, there is no mercy for them, their petition cannot be received, they did not consider the value of time, when they had it; time is no more, and now they are in the hands of inexorable justice. Represent to yourselves a sinner, surprized in the midst of his iniquities, and seized with a mortal distemper; which allows him only a few moments to prepare for making his appearance before the sovereign Judge. His body racked with pain, his mind distracted; how can he properly attend to that great business, which ought to have been the business of his whole life.

Death

Death knocks at his door, his anxious trembling soul is hovering on the borders of eternity, the vast undiscovered country, from which no one returns to bring information of the reception which he found. The severe scrutiny which he must undergo, the impartial sentence to be pronounced on his final and irrevocable doom to be instantly decided, all rise in painful prospect before him. Oh would he not give ten thousand worlds for a month, for a week, for a day to make his peace with heaven. And yet this is the man, who took care to lull himself asleep, under the shadow of a false security; who when a passing thought of conversion forced itself on his mind, foolishly said within himself: I need not be in a hurry, I have time enough yet; when this or that temporal business shall be settled to my satisfaction I will then begin to think seriously on making provision for my future welfare. But now alas he finds his woful mistake. The near approach of those awful realities, which he fancied to be at a great distance from him, opens his eyes to the delusion of a life mispent in vice and folly, mispent in pursuing shadows, and neglecting the substance. Is not this enough to give birth to gloomy and melancholy reflections? Oh he says, in the anguish of his soul, just ready to take her flight to the world of spirits; had I served my God faithfully while I was in health, while I was able to serve him, I might console myself with the prospect of a happy change: But now that the cold hand of death is on me, that the power of sinning has left me, what merit can there be in any thing I can do? Is it not to be dreaded, that he may be tempted to fall into despair, and to say, that his guilt is so great, as to exclude all hopes of pardon.

I know, Christians, that this despair is unreasonable and highly criminal; for while there is

life, there are hopes, and whenever the most grievous sinner turns to the Lord with his whole heart, the arms of the divine mercy are stretched wide to receive him. I only meant to lay before you the dreadful consequences of the abuse of time, to encourage you to take your precautions, and not to wait for that awful moment, which will bring with it terrors enough without being aggravated by the heart-rending pangs of a guilty conscience. Even they whose lives are regular and edifying will then wish, that they had done many good works which they have not done, they will then discern many spots and blemishes which were hidden from their eyes, they will then have occasion to regret, that many of their days and hours were not better employed, that every moment of their precious time was not devoted to the service of God, to the purchase of heaven. I appeal to you, if at that critical hour, which is to determine your fate for ever, it would not be the most earnest wish of your hearts to appear pure and spotless before him who made you, rich in every good work, crowned with every grace, every merit that could entitle you to a favourable sentence. What then, Christians, have you to do? Now, what you would then wish to have done: hold on the present time, it is the only one you can call your own, it is an acceptable time, a time of Salvation for you. Suffer it not to slip out of your hands unimproved, if you do, it will call for vengeance against you. Fill it with virtues which may adorn you as men and as Christians, fill it with actions suitable to the dignity of your nature, suitable to your glorious destination. Let it be the study of your lives to deserve the approbation of him, whose judgment is the ever-revering standard of real and solid merit. Let your employment of time be the constant subject of your serious meditations, ask yourselves, what

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are you doing, what are the objects of your present pursuits? Can you justify them to yourselves? Have they any tendency to promote your present and future happiness? Have you improved your talents? What good have you done to yourselves or to others? What virtues have you acquired? What vices have you subdued, what advances have you made to heaven, have you expiated the fins of your whole lives, have you redeemed your time by making every atonement for your abuse of it, have you repaired all past neglect, have you washed away all the stains of your souls in the blood of the spotless Lamb? If you cannot give a satisfactory answer to these questions, tremble for yourselves, lest you be hurried away to the awful tribunal of God, with all your sins on your heads, no satisfaction made to his justice, nothing done to appease his wrath, it is now in your power to prevent these dreadful evils. Lose no time then, you have none to lose or to spare; for your all is at stake. Form to yourselves a regular plan of conduct, steadily adhere to it, from this very instant let your fixed and unalterable resolution be to employ your time in a proper manner, so as to answer the gracious ends for which it is given you.

THE SECOND PART.

If you mean to improve your time to the best advantage, you will frequently and seriously consider; what your age, your character, your profession, your station in life require. In the great family of human nature various are the employments in which we are engaged, all marked out to us by the divine Providence, whose intention is, that by a faithful and conscientious discharge of our respective duties and obligations, we intitle

ourselves

ourselves to immortal bliss. Many of you have children to provide for and families to maintain by the labour of your hands, by your honest industry, by the lawful and honourable exertion of the talents intrusted to your care. The time devoted to these purposes is profitably employed; it will be an increase of merit; if you make the concerns of this life subordinate to those of the next, if you always keep heaven in view, while you are labouring for your worldly subsistence. You were Christians, before you were merchants, tradesmen, labourers, masters of families, servants for any thing else on earth. Let then the spirit of Christianity be the main-spring of your actions, the leading rule and principle of your conduct. Thus your lawful cares and employments will become so many religious exercises, they will be acts of homage to him who has placed you in such circumstances as make them necessary. If your situation in life should exact duties painful to nature; religion will sweeten the yoke and lighten the burden, it will enoble and sanctify them, it is the fire from heaven that will kindle the sacrifice, and make it acceptable. Here I must take notice of an error, which prevails even among those who style themselves Christians. They imagine that religion has nothing to do with the concerns of this world, that its duties stand apart, that consequently in pursuing their worldly interests, they are at liberty to act as they please. No, Christians, the influence of religion is not to be confined to the cell or the cloister; it is a vital principle which ought to take its seat in the heart, send out supplies of life and heat in every part, diffuse motion, soul and vigour through the whole circulation, inform and animate the whole man, pervade the public and private walks of life, operate on the practice, direct and regulate the conversation, perfect and dignify all our employments.

You are placed in an active sphere of duty that you may have an opportunity of displaying all the moral and Christian virtues: if providence should be pleased to raise you above others, your obligation to do good increases in proportion: it is your duty to consecrate your prosperity to heaven by the charitable use you make of it. As a member of society you are bound to contribute your share to the general good, as a Christian you are bound to maintain your title to a better life by scattering blessings and comforts around you. Thus will your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works will glorify your Father, who is in heaven.

And now for the consolation of the poor, to whom in particular this world is a land of misery and a vale of tears, let them remember, that if they acquit themselves with fidelity of the duties annexed to their humble station, if they bear with Christian patience the hardships which they must unavoidably encounter, they will be amply rewarded by that God who is no respecter of persons, who cannot but look with a favourable eye on those obedient children who conform themselves to the orders of his providence; who receive, with perfect submission to his holy will, the trials which his hand, mercifully severe, is pleased to send them. It is not the station we fill, but the manner in which we fill it, that will entitle us to his friendship. On the stage of this life one may act the part of a king, another that of a beggar, he who acts the part allotted him with the greatest propriety and consistency of character, whatever part that may be, will gain everlasting applause. Cease then to complain, that you have nothing in your power, when it is in your power every day of your lives, to approve yourselves to your God by acting with a view to his approbation. The sanctity we aspire to does not consist in doing extraordinary

extraordinary actions, but in doing our ordinary actions extraordinary well. You may do more good than you imagine by your virtuous example, by your salutary advice, by your charitable attention to your neighbours and acquaintances, who besides the pressure of poverty may have the additional weight of sickness and other afflictions to sink and oppress them. You may sanctify yourselves by the practice of the spiritual works of mercy, opportunities of which daily and hourly present themselves to the well disposed of all ranks and descriptions. Whether your station in the world be high or low, whether you be rich or poor, your first and chief business is to secure your salvation. But in order to attain the end, you must employ the means: keep up an holy intercourse with heaven by prayer. Let the beginning and end of each day be consecrated to him, who holds in his hands the slender thread of your mortal lives, and may cut it short whenever he pleases. When you awake from sleep, which is the natural image of death, let the first motions of your hearts be turned towards that God, who has watched over you during your slumbers, who has commanded his holy angels to pitch their tents around you, and preserve you from the dangers of the night; who, after having refreshed your wearied limbs, and renewed your existence by the sweets and comforts of repose, has enabled you to hail the return of the day, and serve him with redoubled vigour; who has prolonged the term of your lives, that you might give him fresh proofs of your fidelity and attachment, and thereby purchase for yourselves additional degrees of glory in heaven. Pour out your souls in acts of praise and thanksgiving for his paternal care, for all his other mercies. Conscious of your weakness, and of the numberless dangers to which you are exposed, beseech him to shield and protect you, to enlighten and direct you, that supported

ported and strengthened by his holy grace you may walk in the paths of virtue, peace and happiness. Your own experience will tell you on what side you are weakest, what are the ordinary occasions of your deviating from that straight line of conduct which you ought invariably to pursue. Here let the proper guards be set, fortify yourselves in that quarter where you are most exposed and defenceless, and point your spiritual arms against it. You have those particular enemies of your salvation from which there is most to fear. But vain would be all your efforts if not seconded by that Almighty God, without whose aid we can do nothing. Conjure him then to regulate all your thoughts, words and actions, by the unerring maxims of his heavenly wisdom, to reign in your souls, by his holy love, that his honour and glory may be the principal object of your views and actions. Amidst the cares and employments of the day frequently raise your hearts to him by devout aspirations; impress your minds with a strong, lively and habitual sense of his divine presence: often say to yourselves: My God sees me, he hears me, he beholds the inmost recesses of my heart, he knows my most secret thoughts; he is continually about me, how then shall I dare to offend him? When you have devoted the day to the honest labours of your calling and thus complied with the will of God, who has appointed them for you, you may take that nourishment and support, which nature requires, not with a view of indulging sensuality, but for the preservation of your being, which you are bound to preserve, till the sovereign Lord of life and death shall be pleased to put a period to your mortal existence, and call you to himself.

When the night comes on, instead of resorting to the haunts of riot and dissipation, and stupifying yourselves by criminal excesses, learn to be happy at home, review the actions of the day, the business

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ness and conversations in which you were engaged, and the ends you proposed to yourselves, the motives by which you were actuated: implore light from above that you may discover the errors into which your passions, or the bustle and agitation of the world, might have hurried you; bewail them with heartfelt sorrow, reinstate yourselves in the friendship of heaven, and then you may compose yourselves to rest, with a well grounded hope, that he who neither sleeps nor slumbers will watch over you, and shelter you under the shadow of his wings. If you mean that the spirit of religion should preside over your actions, and render them meritorious of eternal life, you must take particular care that the days set apart for the service of the Almighty be consecrated to him, and employed in the exercise of piety and devotion. You are then released from your ordinary cares and occupations, shutting your ears to the noise and clamours of the world, that you may attend to your spiritual interests, repair the breaches which it has made in your souls, praise and bless your God for all his mercies: implore a continuance of them, and qualify yourselves for celebrating an endless and uninterrupted Sabbath in the heavenly Jerusalem. If you attend to these several particulars, which are all comprized in the idea of sanctifying the Lord's day; it is not enough that you spend one half hour in assisting at the adorable sacrifice of the altar. The Church exhorts and commands you to hear the instructions of your pastors, to assist at the divine office, to devote a considerable part of the day to religious duties. Will any one say, that nothing more is required than the hearing of Mass on Sundays and holidays? It is true this is the letter of the law, to the observance of which you are bound by a positive precept. But the spirit and intention of the Church clearly conveyed by her earnest exhortations and even commands are, that you hear the instructions

instructions of your pastors, carry home with you the bread of God's word to be the food and nourishment of your souls. Now I ask you, is this the practice of the generality of Christians? No; when the duty of the morning is once over, and that they contrive to make as easy and commodious to themselves as possible, they imagine that they have a right to dispose of the remainder of the day as they please. Indeed, if intrigues are to be carried on, assignations made, shameful crimes committed, Sundays are the days selected for these purposes. The passions which were kept under during the course of the week by labour, and application to business break loose on Sundays, and indulge themselves without control in every species of vice and folly. What a shocking abuse of days which God has marked for his own! Instead of being honoured and glorified, he is basely insulted. Man instead of sanctifying himself multiplies his guilt, and draws down the divine vengeance on his head.

Christians, learn wisdom from the folly of others, lose not a moment of the precious time appropriated by heaven to the purpose of promoting your best, your everlasting interests. Though you will draw down a blessing on your other employments, which from your situation in life must demand a considerable share of your attention. Observe, that your exactness and punctuality in complying with the duties of religion will never be a hindrance to the discharge of the duties incumbent on you as men, and as members of society. No; by a proper management, you will find time enough for the lawful concerns of this world, and for the grand concerns of eternity. By observing order and regularity, by tracing out a plan of conduct adapted to your respective departments in life, you will be enabled to give to your several obligations that portion of time which is due to them.

hem. You will do every thing in its proper time and place, you will assign to each of them its proper hour; you will not suffer the hours of business to encroach on the hours of devotion; you will live not merely for an engaged world but for God, and for your own souls; and while you are fulfilling the duties of your station, you will secure to yourselves a solid and permanent establishment in heaven. Christians, may you, in due time, seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and never forget that you are heirs of immortality. May it appear by your lives that you are impressed with a just sense of the value of time. But alas, what use have you hitherto made of it? How many years have you suffered to roll over your heads without the least improvement? How many days and hours have you foolishly thrown away, or criminally abused. With heartfelt sorrow, O my God, we confess our ingratitude. We have been barren trees in the garden of thy Church; we have deserved to be cut down, and cast into the fire. But thy mercy, O Lord, has preserved us, that we might regret the past, improve the present by redoubled fervour, and prepare for appearing before thee, O Judge of the living and the dead. May our days and years be full; may they abound in good works, and when time shall be no more, may we enjoy thy blessed sight for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N X I X .

ON THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

For the Last Sunday after Pentecost.

And then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. These words are read in this day's Gospel, St. Matt. xxiv. 30.

THE coming of our Saviour to judge the world is the grand and awful scene which the Church of this day exhibits to your view. We are all interested in the solemn business of that great day, which will put an end to the revolution of the world, and fix us in a state that knows no change and receive for our portion everlasting happiness or eternal misery. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to render an account of our works, whether good or evil. Of all the truths of the Christian religion, there is none can be more to our purpose than to have our souls deeply penetrated with a sense of this great truth; accordingly we find it strongly inculcated in every part of holy writing; and see the several particulars painted in the most lively colours of this last and general

general trial of the sons of men. The signs that are to precede, from the bare recital of them, are of an alarming nature: our feelings must receive a painful but salutary shock. The sea roaring with unusual rage, and swelling beyond the bounds it had observed for so many ages: all the elements in disorder and confusion, all the heavenly bodies in darkness, the sun withdrawing its rays, the earth shaking to its foundations: all the elements at war, nature expiring. Christians, is not this enough to make men wither away for fear, in expectation of what is to come upon the whole world? When we hear of hurricanes tearing up the deep-rooted oaks and shaking the hills on which they grow; when we hear of the raging ocean dashing ships in pieces: when we read of earthquakes swallowing whole cities to destruction: do we not consider all these as tremendous effects of the divine power? What then shall we think when the same divine power shall fully exert itself against its enemies; when thunder and lightning, shot from heaven, shall consume the world in avenging fire? Yet, after all, Christians, these dreadful signs are only forerunners of something far more terrible: at the sight of them, the heart of men shall be seized with fear, but how shall this fear be heightened, when they consider that they must appear before that all-seeing Judge, from whom nothing can be concealed. The sinner knows that he is to be arraigned, before that God whom he has so often offended, that his crimes are to be exposed in the face of all mankind, that he must hear that sentence passed upon him which is to seal his misery. Oh, then he will call to the hills and mountains to fall upon and screen him from the vengeance of the searcher of hearts. The thoughts of judgment made the mountains themselves to tremble. What shall I do, says holy Job, when the Lord shall come to judge, when he shall demand an account of me, what shall

shall I answer for myself? Let us enter into these sentiments, let the terror of God's judgments sink deep in our hearts, that we may have nothing to fear on the day of wrath.

This is the main object which I propose to myself in the following discourse. I shall endeavour with the divine assistance, to give you a faint idea of the general judgment. To comprehend so vast a subject by selecting such circumstances of it as appeared to me best calculated to make an impression on you, and bring forth fruits of salvation in your souls. In the first part you shall see the sinner condemned by himself: in the second you shall see him condemned by all mankind, and by his God.

O divine Saviour, who art to be the judge of the living and the dead, may the consideration of our final doom excite that holy fear which is the beginning of wisdom. It is in thy power, O Lord, to raise the dead to life; may the thunder of thy judgments awake us from our spiritual lethargy and raise us from the death of sin to the life of grace; may we never forget the strict account that we are to be called to; may it appear by our lives that we are deeply impressed with a sense of the solemn and interesting truths thou art pleased to reveal to us. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, whom we salute in the words of the Angels saying: *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Now, Christians, the trumpet sounds which stirs the silent dust, and breaks the slumbers that were begun before the general flood. All nature obedient to the call; not an atom remains behind. The scattered fragments of human bodies meet again, restored to life by the same power which first

have them life. All nations, from the beginning of the world to the end, are summoned to judgment. Where is the difference now between the rich and the poor, the master and his servant, the lord and his dependants, the king and the subject; worldly distinctions are laid aside, all on a level, they are all men, and are all to be judged. Oh! with what pain do the wicked lift their trembling eyes, and revisit the light that is precious to them. Oh! would they not wish to be snatched up for ever in the darkness of the grave, and buried under the ruins of nature! Vain are their wishes, appear they must before the Son of God, who is seated on his heavenly throne attended by millions of angels, and armed with thunder and lightning for the destruction of his enemies. Is this he who was born in Bethlehem, who was laid in a manger, who expired on a cross? I say, Christians, he who was treated as the last of men, arrayed with all the glory and majesty of the God-head, and proclaimed the Author of life and death. Now, impious Jews, insult him if you dare; present him a mock sceptre, and bend the knee before him in derision. There was a time when he gave himself up into the hands of his enemies; but this is his day, the day of the Lord, and he will do himself ample justice. On that night of trouble and anguish which preceded his bitter passion, in that very garden where his sacred humanity seemed to sink under the weight of the sins of mankind and of the torments prepared for him, did he not lay his enemies prostrate at his feet by pronouncing these few words: I am the Son of Man. Judge then how the sinner must be confounded, when the Son of God on this day of his triumph, and of the full manifestation of his power, shall pronounce the same words against him, I am the Son of Man. Oh! he whom you have so often insulted, whom you

you have crucified afresh, whose blood you have trampled under foot.

If you attend to the nature of this charge, any one of the circumstances I have pointed out to you be enough to fill the guilty soul with desolating anguish: what must be the united impression made, especially, when all the terrors arising from them are heightened by the testimony of her own conscience. What an aggravation of her misery this must be, you may judge from the power which conscience has even in this life. I shall produce against her the testimony of her own conscience; this will be enough to condemn her, and the sentence of the Almighty will be only a ratification of that which she pronounces against herself. What impressions conscience must make on her, what remorse she feels you may easily judge. I appeal to any man of feeling, if there be not something within him to condemn himself on the commission of any crime. What makes the murderer always restless and uneasy, why is he afraid to be alone; why does he start at every noise. Does not his imagination represent to him the victim of his cruelty, and always stands before him? Do we not sometimes see the guilty fly from the pangs and agonies he endures, to his own destruction? Now if conscience can produce dreadful effects even in this life, where her voice is so often drowned in the tumult of raging passions, in the torrent of bad example which overflows the world, what must be the despair of the unhappy Christian on the Last day, when the world is no more. Now will the Almighty put in execution the menace recorded in holy Writ: I will confront thee with thyself and set thee before thine own face. He will judge the wicked servant from his own mouth; he will make both reason and faith appear in evidence against him. Reason is an emanation of the divinity; by this noble faculty we partake of the

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ritual nature, and are like unto God himself: is given us to direct and regulate our actions, to discern good from evil, that we may choose the one and avoid the other. But as reason alone, without grace and faith, is not adequate to the purposes of our glorious destination, to save our souls, the Almighty has been pleased to bestow on us the gift of faith, by which he has called us to an admirable light, and distinguished us from so many nations which are in darkness, and in the shades of death. It is faith that raises our actions, to that sublime and supernatural end for which we were created. Now, if the Christian refuses to follow these two guides, which were to conduct him through the snares and dangers of this life, they must necessarily condemn him on the Last day. If he charges, which these unexceptionable witnesses will produce against him, be just, where was your reason, O sinner, when immersed in flesh and blood you degraded yourself to a level with the beasts of the field, sunk under the load of your criminal excesses, and eat and drank yourself into the grave? Where was your reason, when, to gratify a brutal passion, you robbed a young creature of her reputation, dearer to her than life, disturbed the peace of her family, and entailed disgrace and infamy on them. Where was your reason, when, not respecting the most sacred ties, and in open defiance to the laws of God and man, you disunited ever those who ought to be inseparable companions during life; where was your reason, when you swallowed up those infamous vices at which nature shudders, vices that ought not to be named among Christians? Was it reason, O hard hearted man, that made you deaf to the cries of the poor, who, in times of general calamity, implored your relief? Perhaps your sins had a great share in drawing down the divine vengeance on a whole nation; while you, like the rich man in the Gospel,

pel, were quite at your ease, feasted sumptuously every day, and would not suffer your distressed fellow creatures to pick up the crumbs that fell from your table. It would be endless to enumerate the several charges which reason will bring home against the sinner. What plea can he make for himself? None at all. In this life he was ingenious enough to disguise, he was not at a loss for pretexts to justify or to gloss over his iniquities, he took care to lull his reason asleep; but now all his passions are at her feet; seated on her throne, she will vindicate her right, dispel the mists which false love had raised before his eyes, and make him see such as he is. He will then be forced to condemn himself, and who will dare to plead his cause when he gives it up for lost? How great must his confusion be, when his faith shall appear against him, and give evidence, not according to the maxims of the world, but according to the strict rules of the Gospel. What a monstrous contradiction between his faith and his practice.

These few words; what have I believed? what have I done? will furnish him with melancholy reflections: the holy religion he professed, preached up a life of self-denial, mortification and penance, and what has his life been, but a life of ease, dissipation and pleasure? In the bosom of his religion have been formed so many saints, who nobly triumphed over the weakness of nature; but in regard to him, the precious talent buried in a sink of iniquity is lost; the same religion has been quite fruitless, the wicked man sums up a dreadful account and aggravates his guilt, he lived as if he had no sense of religious truth. Here what a multiplicity of crimes will start up at once, and be laid in the eye of his remembrance. Not only his secret actions, their hidden springs and motives, their whole process, all the vile and base ingredients that entered into the composition of the

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his very thoughts and intentions shall undergo a rigorous examination; not only the evil he has done, but even the good he might have done, and what he omitted to do; not only his own personal faults, but even the faults of others, which he has promoted, encouraged and authorised by his bad example, by his pernicious counsels, by his free and loose conversation. How painful, how mortifying the reflection, that he has abused the divine grace and the powerful means of salvation his holy religion held out to him. The sacraments profaned, the divine inspirations rejected, the warnings so often given him by the preachers of God's word, and as often slighted, all this will come against him in full force; he will feel the weight of the charge, and acknowledge that he is the author of his own ruin. The disorders of his whole life, from the moment he was capable of sin to the moment he drew his last breath, shall all be collected together, and ranged in order before the unhappy sinner. O God, what a shocking sight this must be! What a subject of despair and distraction. But who can be secure, when he considers that even his seemingly good works shall be produced against him, to fill up the measure of his iniquities. Those actions, on which you valued yourselves most, shall be found vitiated in their source; a bad intention shall be seen lying at the bottom, and as God had no share therein he will never reward you for them. You were charitable, at least you appeared to be so, but you loved to make a shew of it; you took pleasure in sounding your own praises, in having your good works proclaimed, not for the edification of the neighbour, but to gratify your own pride. You fasted, you prayed a good deal, but you did not spare publishing your neighbour's sins; you indulged yourselves in a censorious conversation dictated by an unchristian spirit: how can you expect mercy from your God, when

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you shewed none to your fellow-creatures? Christians, can you conceive the poison of envy lodged in your hearts, can any thing be more terrible than this examination? Who can paint the doleful situation of the sinner, overwhelmed with anguish, oppressed with guilt, he must consider himself as an object of malediction, as a victim of the divine vengeance.

THE SECOND PART.

On the last day it will be universally allowed that the judgments of God are perfectly right: for this purpose it will be necessary that the iniquity of the sinner be displayed before all mankind. What an effect this public manifestation must have on him, will appear evident from a few simple observations. Let me suppose that any one here present were singled out of this congregation, and charged before you all, with one disgraceful and secret crime, which he had entrusted to the shade of night, to the silence of solitude, a crime which he would not disclose even to his most intimate friend; would not such a discovery be a mortal blow to his heart, would he not be thunderstruck, would he not die for shame? What then must his situation be, when the black catalogue of his crimes shall be produced before all the children of Adam, who will be convinced of his guilt, who will form the same judgment of him that God himself does, who will join in his condemnation. The disgrace of the sinner will be complete, and he will be left destitute of every resource. In this life, if a man, playing the hypocrite, a conductor notoriously criminal, should expose himself to infamy, it is hard if he has not some friend who will endeavour to console him, and help him to bear the weight of the public censure; at least he will find some whom his bad conduct does not concern.

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cern, who consequently will look on him with an eye of indifference. At any rate, his infamy is confined to this or that country, or at most to a few nations; he may then retire to a place where he is not known, and recover in one country a reputation he had forfeited in another. But on the day of Judgment, nothing to assuage his mortal anguish, not one will be for him, not one neuter or indifferent, all will be against him. He must remain fixed and motionless in the place allotted him; there is no corner or hiding place for him; the eyes of all mankind are upon him, and he must bear the full weight of his disgrace. If he were to expect any quarter, one would think it would come from sinners like himself. But they condemn themselves, and can he imagine that they will spare him? Will they not look on him with the same horror that they do on themselves? There are some of them, in whom he has weakened the principles of faith and of Christian morality, whom he has instructed in the ways of iniquity which they could perhaps have never known, had it not been for him, he has plunged them thereby into a disorderly life; and will they not now pour reproach and imprecations on his guilty head, and charge him with the ruin of their souls? The just in this life threw the cloak of charity over his faults, they endeavoured to extenuate them even when they could not find any apparent excuse; but now they will see the enormity of his guilt in the clearest light; they will openly espouse their master's cause; the day of judgment is come, and they will stand forth in defence of God's justice. The very infidels will appear against the unhappy Christian: or had they been favoured with the same knowledge, with the same means of salvation, they could have turned them to a better account, and the places which he has abused to his eternal ruin could be to them a source of sanctification. What

then has he to expect? He that has received more shall be required of him; he has been highly favoured, and he shall be severely dealt with. For our blessed Saviour declares, that Tyre and Sidon shall fare better on the last day. Wo be to thee Corozain, wo be to thee Bethsaida, for had I wrought in Tyre and Sidon the same wonders I have wrought in you, they would long since have done penance in sackcloth and ashes.

How humiliating this public infamy, what pains men take in this life to appear to the best advantage; they have certain passions and weaknesses, which if brought to light would disgrace them in the public eye; for this reason, they shew a false outside in order to conceal what they are, and pass for what they are not. There are many sinners in this life, who under a composed exterior are nothing but an interior corruption; they deceive the world by their apparent virtues, while they deal in mysteries of iniquity which cannot bear the light. But surely, God is not to be deceived. Yet, notwithstanding, you will not find one in a thousand who would wish to be thoroughly known. He declares himself that he will expose their crimes before nations, and their shame before kingdoms; he will enlighten the hidden things of darkness and disclose the secrets of hearts. Then shall the sinner be known such as he is. How dismal is his situation! he is set up as an object of general contempt and detestation, he is abandoned by all. O this is truly a day of wrath to him, a day of calamity and misery, a day of mourning and despair, a day exceedingly bitter. Now the Son of Man sends his Angels to pluck up all scoundrels out of his kingdom, to separate the good from the bad, the just from the wicked. O dreadful

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separation! the parent is to be separated from his child, the husband from his wife, the brother from his sister, one bosom friend from another, they are to part for ever, and never more to meet. In this life we consider death terrible, because it tears from us those who were nearest and dearest to us. However this is but a temporary separation we expect to meet them again, and to be for ever united to them. But the separation that is to take place on the Last day shall hold for ever, time shall be no more; there shall be no farther change; what will the confusion of sinners be, when they see the just hastening to glory and themselves doomed to everlasting torments. In this life they beheld the just as mere idiots, unacquainted with the ways of the world, they treated them as objects of contempt and ridicule: but now they see them ranked among the saints. They must then acknowledge that with all their pretended wisdom, they have strayed from the paths of righteousness and truth. And now at God's command this prodigious multitude forms two distinct bodies, the elect and the reprobate, the friends of God, and his enemies. Joy and confidence on one side, terror and confusion on the other; the just look up to their Redeemer, and to those seats of bliss, where all the desires of their hearts will be perfectly gratified. The reprobate with down cast eyes, looking towards the eternal abyss, opened to receive its destined prey. The universe is in deep silence when the sovereign Judge pronounces sentence. Turning to the right with an air of sweetness and majesty, Come, says he, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; you were strangers and pilgrims on earth; come to your true country;

try; you had toils and conflicts to undergo, come and enjoy the fruits of your labours; you had a share in my sufferings; you shall share in my glory; you have fought my battles, a never-fading crown awaits you. Then turning to the left he says, depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, which was prepared for you, Oh dreadful sentence! they must then depart from the presence of their maker, they must go with a malediction on their heads. But whither must they go? into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. This place of woe and despair was never intended for them, but they purchased it for themselves, they slighted the mercy of their God, and they must feel the full weight of his justice. Oh misery of miseries! When they shall have spent a thousand and ten thousand years in fire, their torments shall begin afresh, no intermission, no abatement to their sin, immortality is their everlasting curse; they must burn for ever and ever.

Christians, if you have a spark of faith in you, this is enough to rouse you; it is time for you to rise from the sleep of sin. Wake up unto him whom the thunder of God's Justice cannot awake. Let the fear of his terrible judgments pierce your very souls: Let this fear be always present to you, as it was with St. Jerome, that wherever you are, whatever you do, hear the last trumpet sounding continually in your ears: Rise, ye dead, and come to judgment. But let this fear be an active one, let it reform your lives to do good works, to the profit of these days of God's mercy, that you may not fall into the hands of his justice. Confess your sins, condemn yourselves, and God will acquit you. Spare not yourselves and God will spare you; punish yourselves, that God may find nothing in you to punish: Conduct yourselves like criminals to be

be tried for life, who take care to make use of every thing that may be in their favour, and to be prepared for every thing that may come against them. Offer an holy violence to heaven by your prayers, by your penitential tears and by your plentiful almsdeeds. Thus, may you expect to appear with confidence on the last day and to hear from your Redeemer these reviving words: Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. Amen.

S E R M O N X X .

ON THE FEAST OF SAINT PATRICK.

In Christ Jesus I have begotten you by the Gospel. First
Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians iv. 15.

AS it was the glory of St. Paul, and of the other Apostles to have been the spiritual fathers of the different nations, which they enlightened with the rays of the Gospel; so it is the glory of the great Saint whose festival we celebrate this day to have been our spiritual father, and to have brought us forth to Jesus Christ. Here we cannot sufficiently admire the riches of the goodness and mercy of our God. From the first ages of Christianity to the present times, we find him displaying the wonders of his Providence in raising extraordinary men, filled with his holy Spirit, and eminently qualified for the great work of the conversion of nations. The spiritual blessings imparted to us by their ministry call for our gratitude to him, who is the source and fountain of all that is good, and that is holy. But while our sovereign homage and adoration are exclusively reserved for the supreme Being, we are naturally inclined to hold in a peculiar

ular veneration those, whom he has been pleased to make use of as so many instruments for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes. Such sentiments are the effusions of a grateful heart; reason applauds and religion sanctifies them. If they, to whom a nation is indebted for temporal benefits, are held up to the admiration of succeeding ages, if they live in the hearts of those who enjoy the fruits of their labours, if their memory be revered, and their names immortalised, can we refuse the tribute of gratitude to these holy servants of God, whose labours were directed to the sanctification of souls, whose spiritual conquests enlarged the kingdom of Jesus Christ. What then ought our sentiments to be on the festival of our illustrious Apostle, to whom under God we owe the greatest of all blessings, our vocation to the Christian faith. Thanks for ever to the Father of mercies, who has been pleased to visit this remote corner of the earth, and enrich it with the treasures of grace and sanctity. May the name of that great saint be ever revered, who, when our ancestors were buried in the shades of idolatry, held out to them the light of the Gospel, announced to them the words of eternal life, and left us all entitled to a greater inheritance, than the most powerful monarch could bestow. For we are raised to the sublime dignity of the children of God, and co-heirs of Jesus Christ. Our misfortune is, that we seldom or never reflect on the inestimable advantages we enjoy as Christians. There are some who remain as yet strangers to those great truths, which were impressed on our tender minds in the early part of life. Many of those nations that were once enlightened, are unhappily fallen off. But it is our happiness not only to have received the saving truths of the Gospel, but to have inviolably persevered therein for a series of ages.

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If ever then there was an occasion that ought to make your hearts overflow with gratitude to the Almighty, it should be the present, when you celebrate, not the vocation of the Jews, not the vocation of the Gentiles in general, but your own particular vocation to the faith of Jesus Christ. You see then, my dear Christians, that the subject I mean to lay before you is highly interesting to you. In order to answer your reasonable expectations, I shall endeavour, with the divine assistance, to point out to you the principal virtues of your great Apostle, and the success which attended his labours. This last consideration will naturally lead to draw a contrast between the former flourishing state of Christianity in this country, and its present declining state: this shall be the subject of the following discourse, and of your favourable attention.

O eternal Source of light and truth, thou hast been pleased to shine upon our ancestors in the days of their darkness and ignorance, and teach them those pure and sublime doctrines, which unassisted reason could never attain to. Accept the homage of a grateful people, and continue to display thy mercies in their favour. If any of them have strayed from thee, O my God, recall them from their wanderings, lead them into the paths of peace and happiness, and guard them against a spirit of disobedience and licentiousness, so contrary to the principles of their holy religion. May the virtues of their illustrious Apostle, and of so many eminent saints formed by his paternal care fill the hearts with shame and confusion, when they reflect on their unhappy degeneracy. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, whom we address by the words of the Angel. *Hail Mary.*

To proceed shall first great saint ministry. into captivity country, w many of Sa was that there exposed to hunger and his four the constant on. When his birth, ending six cannot but once, who ourites. oh was sold which he wa me. St. P land, which horrors o bread of d authority trick becom me shall be the affliction placement of Patrick was fervour wa from the was feeding heaven. I the refiner fied Saviour tion to t Apostles w presented i

To proceed with order on so difficult a subject, shall first take notice of the virtues which this great saint displayed before he was called to the ministry. At an early age he was carried away into captivity, and sold as a slave in this very country, which he was to deliver from the tyranny of Satan. And what was his occupation? It was that of keeping cattle on the mountains, there exposed to the inclemency of the weather, hunger and every sort of distress, he consecrated his soul to God by fervent meditation, by the constant exercise of prayer and contemplation. When I beheld this child distinguished by his birth, and much more so by his virtue, spending six years in so mean an employment, cannot but admire the ways of God's providence, who sends the severest trials to his greatest favourites. Thus, we find that the patriarch Joseph was sold as a slave, and brought into Egypt. Which he was to save from the horrors of famine. St. Patrick is doomed to be a slave in Ireland, which he is to save from the more dreadful horrors of a spiritual famine and feed with the bread of life. Joseph is invested with power and authority, and made the ruler of Egypt: Patrick becomes the Apostle of Ireland, where his name shall be ever dear to his spiritual children. The afflictions of Joseph contributed to the advancement of his soul in virtue, and the slavery Patrick was to him a source of every blessing; his fervour was redoubled; nothing could divert him from the service of his God; and thus while he was feeding brute beasts, his conversation was with heaven. How necessary then are sufferings, to the refinement and perfection of virtue. Our blessed Saviour was pleased to drink the cup of affliction to the very dregs; he presented it to the Apostles who took off large draughts of it: he presented it also to our great Apostle, who may

may glory in his sufferings, from which he derived such treasures of grace and merit. There cannot then be a more obedient proof of our being in favour with our God, and of being of the number of the elect, than when he calls us in his mercy to take up the cross of Jesus Christ and follow him, that we may share in his glory. Can it be said, that we have that true and solid love, which he requires of those who belong to him, unless we be purified in the furnace of tribulation. Here then is the test of genuine virtue, nothing counterfeit can stand before it. Another instance of the interposition of Providence in his captivity was, that it introduced him to an early acquaintance with the language, manners, and dispositions of the people, who Apostle he was to be, a circumstance highly favourable to the success of his labours. Warned by God to return to his own country, he finds a vessel just ready to sail: but here a new trial awaits him. He is poor, he is not able to give the usual fare, and therefore he cannot obtain his passage. He returns, he prays, he is called back, by those very pagans, who at first refused him admittance. When they are landed, they wander through the deserts for many days; they are at a loss for provisions, they know not what to do. In this extremity, the holy youth gives a striking proof of his unlimited confidence in the power of the Almighty. He assures them that if they addressed themselves with their whole hearts to the true God, they would instantly find relief. He joins them in prayer, and his prayer has the desired effect. From that day provisions never failed them, here we have an admirable instance of the efficacy of holy prayer, which penetrates the clouds, and draws down every blessing from the throne of grace.

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Christians, you will not neglect this salutary exercise, if you mean to bring relief and comfort to your souls, which are perishing with spiritual hunger. No; you will pour forth your hearts in the presence of your God; you will mingle your tears with the sacred blood of Jesus, and conjure him by his death and sufferings to be a Saviour to you. You are soon to commemorate the adorable mysteries, by which your redemption was accomplished. This then is the favourable time to deprecate the divine wrath, and re-estate yourselves in the friendship of your God. How happy would you be, were you blessed with that spirit of prayer, which made your illustrious patron so great a favourite of heaven. With what joy he was received by his parents, after so long an absence, may be more easily conceived than described. In vain they conjured him to spend with them the rest of his days, he was destined to a more useful and glorious employment. The Almighty, who can manifest his will when, and in what manner, he pleases, clearly intimated to him his gracious views in favour of this country. He tells us himself, that in a vision a letter was presented to him, the first words of which were: The voice of the Irish. At the same moment, he thought he saw all the children of Ireland from the wombs of their mothers stretching out their hands, and crying to him for relief. I know that in this age of criticism and of free investigation, visions of this sort are generally treated with ridicule. But surely, the authority of the saint himself ought to be sufficient to remove any doubt, that may arise in our minds. Whoever reads the Scriptures, must know, that by a vision St. Peter was assured of the vocation of the Gentiles; that by a vision St. Paul was assured, that he was to announce the faith of Christ to the Macedonians. Our Saint,

Saint, ever obedient to the will of heaven, immediately formed the resolution of converting Ireland. To qualify himself for this great work he undertook a long and painful journey. In France and Italy he applied himself to the sacred studies, improved his mind in learning, and his soul in virtue under the direction of the most eminent masters of the science of the saints. Here the authors of his life are unanimous. They also affirm, that he received his mission and the apostolical benediction from St. Celestine, who then sat in the chair of St. Peter. Here we may observe, that as the Apostles were empowered by Jesus Christ to carry his name before kings and nations, their successors, to the end of time, must be lawfully authorized by those who are Christ's vicegerents on earth. This is conformable to the rules of subordination, from which a well regulated government will never depart. What would you think of a man, who in a civilized country would presume to exercise acts of civil jurisdiction, without having the sanction of government or of the laws of the land to support him? You would look on him as an usurper, and an invader of rights and privileges which he was not entitled to. How then can any one exercise a spiritual jurisdiction in the Church of Christ without the approbation and sanction of those whom Christ has invested with spiritual power and authority over him. The necessity of a lawful mission is grounded on the words of St. Paul, who says: How can they preach, if they be not sent. What transports of holy joy must our Saint have felt, when he received full powers for carrying on that great work, which was the constant object of his most earnest desires for the better accomplishment of which he had made so long and so serious a preparation. He arrived in this country accompanied by a few attendants,

endants, men distinguished by their piety and wisdom. Represent to yourselves the difficulties, which the Apostles had to encounter in the conversion of the world; then you may be able to form some idea of the arduous task, in which our saint engaged. It is true, he had some forerunners in the spiritual conquest; but they confined themselves to particular districts. Palladius was the first, who formed the plan of converting the whole nation. However he met with violent opposition, remained a short time, and converted but a few. It is clear then, that the general conversion of Ireland was reserved for St. Patrick. Thanks for ever to that God, who in his infinite goodness armed our great apostle with a zeal and fortitude, which were proof against the united forces of Hell and the world. Fearless of danger he addresses himself first to the kings and princes, whom he finds seated in darkness and the shadow of death, and calls many of them to the admirable light of faith. He gains to Christ an infinite number of souls, whose stains are washed away by the salutary waters of regeneration; consecrates bishops and ordains priests, who may assist him, in his labours; he induces many to embrace states of perfection, which never ought to be shut up against those happy souls that are called to them. He distributes large alms, he ceases not to give till he has no more to bestow; he scatters blessings wherever he passes. He flies from province to province, impatient to communicate to all the gifts of heaven, and to rescue those souls which Satan held bound in iron chains. Shall I follow him to the general assembly of the kings, and states of Ireland, which was yearly held at Tarah, the residence of the chief king, who was styled monarch of the whole Island, and the principal seat of the druids and heathen priests. The king is against him; but

but the hand of the Lord is with him. He confounds the druids, and converts many. The authors of his life assure us, that on this extraordinary occasion the Almighty interposed in favour of his holy servant, by enabling him to work such signs and wonders as were capable of convincing the most obstinate.

And indeed, according to the rules of human wisdom, there could not have been a more proper time for the display of miraculous powers, than when the collective body of the whole nation were assembled. You know, that of all other proofs, this is the most striking, it requires no intricate reasoning; it makes a forcible impression on the heart of man; beats down the most inveterate prejudices, and captivates the understanding to the yoke of faith. For, must we not believe, that man sent by God, and his doctrine true, who produces such credentials, and shews the certainty of his mission, and the truth of his doctrine stamp'd with the broad seal of heaven? It is impossible that the Almighty, a being of infinite goodness, sanctity, and wisdom should ever act against himself, or exert his omnipotence to lead his creatures into error. No; he can never attest, authorize or propagate a falsehood. And therefore, the succession of miracles in the Church of Christ, from age to age, is an incontestable proof of the truth of the doctrine which she proposes to her children. When I see our great Apostle combating, and defeating so many idolaters with the arms of heaven, at once I am struck with the idea of the infinite power of God, who holds in his hands the hearts of men and commands them as he pleases. In the midst of the favours conferred on him by the Almighty, he is perfectly humble, he gives us a striking instance of this virtue, at a time when he is obliged to exercise his authority. A certain

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rant having made a descent into Ireland plundered the country, slew many of our saints and converts who were as yet in their baptismal garments, and carried away the rest into captivity. The Saint writes to the Tyrant intreating him to restore the Christian captives: but instead of receiving a favourable answer, his petition is treated with mockery and insult. To prevent the scandal that may arise on this occasion, he writes a public circular letter, in which he styles himself a sinner: however he declares that he is established bishop of Ireland, and therefore, he pronounces the tyrant and his accomplices separated from him, and from Jesus Christ, whose place he holds. This sentence was not to be reversed, until they would wash away their sins by penitential tears, and restore the servants of Christ to their liberty. The Tyrant remained obstinate, and fell a victim to the divine vengeance. In his Confession he represents himself as the most undeserving of men, who were exalted by the tender mercies of the Almighty; he thanks heaven for supplying him with constant matter of humiliation in the persecutions, which the success of his labours raised against him.

You see, Christians, an eminent Saint, an illustrious Apostle humbling himself before his God, and referring to him the glory of every thing that was done by his ministry. But how few imitate his humility? Are there not many so intoxicated with a false notion of their own excellence, as to feel exceedingly hurt, if every compliment and attention be not paid them? If they observe, that any one is more admired or esteemed than themselves, and this very often is the case of those, who have not an atom of real merit to recommend them. Surprized that the world does not see them in that magnifying glass, in which they see themselves, they

are a prey to vexation and disappointment, they give vent to those unruly passions, and publicly expose their weakness; thus their pride makes them not only odious to God, but contemptible even in the sight of their fellow creatures. Can a sinner who looks into his own heart, and there discovers a mass of sin, misery and corruption, be so lost to all sense of reason and religion, as to set a high value on himself? Learn then to be little in your own eyes, and you will be great in the sight of heaven.

To follow our Apostle step by step, and to enter into a detail of his labours, is a task to which I feel myself unequal: A circumstantial account of this sort, would exceed the limits of a discourse from the pulpit. We know, that his ministry was crowned with the most glorious success; every where churches were to be seen raised to the living God, and schools of piety and learning, the reputation of which, for three successive centuries, drew many foreigners into this country for their instruction and improvement. Ireland became a flourishing garden in the Church of God, and an island of saints. In the midst of the distractions, with which the western empire was convulsed, here learning took up her peaceful abode, and invited the youth of the continent to this remote corner of the then known world. Did not this once happy isle people the different countries of Europe with colonies of saints, and supply them with the most celebrated masters of the science of salvation. Are not France, Germany and Italy indebted to this country for the revival of piety and literature, at a time, when they were nearly extinguished by the inundations of the Goths and Vandals. This is a fact, which cannot be controverted; it is admitted without dispute by all writers who treat on the subject. You see, my dear Christians, that

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the Almighty has been pleased to raise your country to a distinguished rank among nations. It ought to be the study of your lives, to merit a continuance of the blessings of heaven, by imitating the virtues of your ancestors. Their sincere and solid piety, their zeal for the honour and glory of God, their obedience and humility laid the foundation of their greatness. Examine yourselves, and see, if there be any traces of these virtues to be found among you. Alas! what a painful prospect forces itself upon me. Must I interrupt the joy of the present solemnity, and expose to your view the shameful degeneracy and disgrace of our country. You all know, what ravages the demon of discord has lately made in this distracted province. Who would have imagined, that the poor in particular, who were ever remarkable for their attention to the duties of their holy religion, and for their obedience to their pastors, would throw off all restraint, and insult and persecute those who watched over them as being to render an account of their souls? Was it not matter of surprize and astonishment, to see a deluded multitude rush into the houses of public worship, to administer oaths of iniquity, and spend, in acts of profanation, those very days which the Lord has made for himself? What, shall the very people, who in times of persecution, travelled many a mile to hear the prayers and instructions of their pastors, and that in the open air, now work themselves to such a pitch of madness, as to exclude the ministers of the living God from the houses consecrated to his service? And what have they gained by their nightly excursions, their wild schemes, their acts of outrage and barbarity? The sword of justice is lifted up against them more dreadful than ever; for how could they expect redress, while they continued to set the laws at defiance.

You see, how easily a silly credulous people are led to the very brink of destruction by artful incendiaries, who have their private views for kindling the flames of dissention. I know that many hearers detest from their hearts such unwarrantable proceedings, and therefore they may be apt to think, that the observations I have made are quite unnecessary with regard to them. But how can they think so, when the contagion is so near them, when the inhabitants of a neighbouring parish, have by their obstinacy forced our ecclesiastical superiour to draw the spiritual sword against them, and to treat them as heathens and publicans. In vain he endeavoured to reclaim them by gentle and lenient methods; the most powerful reasonings were lost on them; they were not to be convinced. What then remained for him to do, but what he has done. How happy would they be, did they return to a sense of their duty, and of their obedience to those of whom Jesus Christ has said: He that hears you, hears me; he that despises you, despises me. Would not this be much better for them, than to remain as they are, deprived of the benefit of instruction, and of those other advantages which the Church holds out to her children. Can it be a pleasure to them to be singled out of a diocese as refractory members, as wanton disturbers of the peace.

O Religion, how art thou fallen? What is become of thee, when thy children shut their ears and harden their hearts against thy holy instructions. Is it not to be dreaded, that the Almighty will visit us in his wrath, and by an effect of his just and terrible judgments deprive us of the precious gift of faith, which we abuse and dishonour? You know that the light of the Gospel was eclipsed in many countries, where its rays were diffused. How many nations in the East

where flourish the Apostles, distinguished by their labours, are now as if they were dead. This is to be the heaven of the chosen people, to continue to be a Redeemer. He drew his blood for us, could a greater faith, which is the power of the folly of their ingratitude and the labours of the water to refresh our eyes, to be deluded by which they guilty heads of their rebellious peaceable and duty to be conscience of themselves by the national of the primitive persecutions, against their meekness they opposed redress, it was and remonstrance

where flourishing Churches were planted by the Apostles, where so many eminent doctors distinguished themselves by their piety and learning, are now sunk in barbarism and ignorance; as if they had never been enlightened. How is this to be accounted for? They were rebellious to the heavenly light, and therefore it passed from them to a people, who proved themselves more worthy of receiving it. The Jews were once the chosen people of God: and why do they not continue to be so? They slighted the mercies of a Redeemer, and therefore the Almighty withdrew his blessings from them. Oh Christians, could a greater misfortune befall us than to lose the faith, which guides us to heaven. And yet, this is the misfortune to which we are exposed by the folly and madness of a set of people, who by their ingratitude render the goodness of God, and the labours of our great Apostle quite fruitless with regard to them. Oh, who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, to bewail the wretched situation of our secluded brethren, and the far greater miseries, which they are likely to bring down on their guilty heads? Oh, if they listened to the voice of their religion which recommends to them a peaceable and orderly conduct, and makes it their duty to be obedient to the ruling powers for conscience sake, they would not disgrace themselves by these acts of violence which reflect on the national character. What was the conduct of the primitive Christians under the severe persecutions, which the power of the Cæsars raised against them. They distinguished themselves by their meekness and patience; to their enemies they opposed reason and not force: if they sought redress, it was by the legal method of petition and remonstrance; they offered up supplications
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to heaven for the safety of those very emperors, who had enacted the most rigorous laws against them, who daily imbrued their hands in their blood. At the same time the only charge that could be made against them was, that they were Christians.

Thus they proved themselves true disciples of their divine Master, who both by word and example, enforced a due subordination to the ruling powers. He commanded tribute to be paid to Cesar. He suffered all manner of insults with an invincible patience; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter not opening his mouth. What a monstrous contradiction between this model of perfection which every Christian ought to follow, and the scandalous lives of our nominal Christians? Between that submission and obedience which the primitive Christians paid to the civil authority, as an act of homage which God himself required at their hands, and that spirit of disobedience and licentiousness which has hurried our modern Christians into a flagrant violation of the laws, established for the peace and good order of society? Many of the primitive Christians were glorious martyrs of Jesus Christ; but many of our modern Christians shed their blood in the worst of causes, and fall victims to their own iniquity. Can any one, who is not devoid of all sense of charity and humanity, see so many of his fellow-creatures running blindly to their destruction, and not endeavour to open their eyes to the precipice, on the brink of which they are tottering, just ready to tumble in.

I am persuaded, Christians, that your hearts melt with pity for your poor, misguided, infatuated brethren. You will not therefore refuse

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to join me in humble prayers and supplications to heaven, beseeching the Almighty to look down with an eye of mercy on a people who were once dear to him, to soften their stony hearts, to recall the wanderers from their evil ways, and lead them into the paths of order peace and happiness. O my God, thou commandest the rage of the winds and waves, and restorest a perfect calm. Thou canst with the same ease allay the tempests raised by the passions of men, and compose their agitated minds into a perfect calm. We have reason at all times to deprecate thy wrath; but now in particular, when the din of tumult and disorder has reached thy throne, when the voice of public and accumulated crimes seems to call for speedy vengeance. Hear us, O my God, graciously hear us. It is true; thy justice is infinite; but thy mercy is equally so. We fly from the terrors of thy justice, to hide ourselves in the wounds of Jesus. We conjure thee by that blood, the most precious that was ever spilt, to receive us once more into the arms of thy mercy. And thou, O illustrious Apostle, who hast sanctified this country by thy pious labours, present our prayers before the Most High, recommend them by thy powerful intercession, and obtain for us, what we do not deserve to obtain on our own account. May the light of thy grace, O my God, dispell the mists of delusion which the enemy of souls has raised to blind thy people, and lead them far from thee. May we never be seduced by the wiles and artifices of the infernal serpent. May we never forfeit thy friendship, nor our title to that glorious inheritance to which we are called. May our lives be regulated by the unerring standard of our holy religion. Thus we may expect from
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this land of exile and misery to be translated to those realms of bliss, where all our desires will be perfectly gratified, where we shall rest in the undisturbed enjoyment of that happiness which knows no end, where we shall see, love, and praise thee, O my God for ever and ever. Amen.

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SERMON

S E R M O N X X I .

ON THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST.

Elizabeth shall bear thee a son: He shall be great before the Lord. Luke i. 13, 15.

C H R I S T I A N S , on this day the Church celebrates the festival of a saint, whom you look up to with a peculiar veneration. How justly he is entitled thereto, may be clearly inferred from the testimony which an Angel bears to him in the words of my text: He shall be great before the Lord. When we consider, that the heavenly messenger spoke these remarkable words, in the name and by the authority of the Most High, we cannot conceive a more complete encomium. For he who is great in the sight of God, is great indeed. To be great in our own eyes is a vice very opposite to Christianity; it overturns humility, which is the foundation of Christian perfection. To be great in the world, in the riches and honours thereof, or in the esteem and applause of men, is not a proof of true greatness. For reason and religion tell us, that a man may be possessed of all these exterior advantages, and yet be a stranger to every thing that is great and good.

good. Besides the judgments of men are often false: they often approve what they ought to condemn, and condemn what they ought to approve; they do not see things as they are in themselves, they are so apt to be deceived by appearances, that their praise cannot be considered as the test of real merit. But to be great in the eye of that all-seeing God, who cannot be deceived, who beholds the inmost recesses of our hearts, who there discovers the springs of our actions, our motives and intentions, who knows the just value that ought to be set on them: in a word, to deserve praise from the Sovereign Truth, stamps the virtues of the Baptist as genuine, and exceeds all other praise.

Christians, you would think yourselves happy, if you were found pleasing in the sight of your God; and why do not you endeavour to be so? Why do you not aspire to that true greatness which the world cannot give? Instead of this many of you are apt to envy the rich, the noble and the powerful, though you are convinced that they may be very unhappy in the midst of their riches, in the midst of all that pomp and pageantry which surrounds them. Suffer not yourselves to be deceived, what would it avail you to raise to some consequence in the world, if you were to forfeit your immortal souls? Let every one then put this question home to himself; what rank may I expect to hold in the estimation of that great Being, whose sentence is to decide my lot for an eternity. Consider, that in the lowest of all the lawful occupations of life, you may with the assistance of the divine grace sanctify yourselves, and consequently be truly great; for in this case, you will be great before the Lord, what a pleasing reflection must this be. What a solid comfort to the poor man who though not master of the goods of this life is content with his humble condition, and labour

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earnestly to secure to himself the real and lasting goods of the next. What a lesson to the rich, to place their happiness not in possessing riches, but in making a good use of them! Thus Christians, whatever situation you may be in, the virtues of the Baptist will be a source of instruction to you. These virtues, or at least the principal ones, I mean with the divine assistance to lay before you in the following discourse, and to point out to you, by entering into a particular detail, in what his greatness consists.

O God the Son, who art wonderful in thy signs, but in none more wonderful than in thy only precursor; grant that the virtues of this great saint, may fill our hearts with an holy emulation. He was sent into the world to prepare the way before thee; may he continue to do so, may the consideration of his glorious merits dispose our souls for thy sanctifying grace. O blessed Virgin, whose presence the prophetic infant exulted in his mother's womb, we humbly implore thy intercession, addressing thee in the words of the Angel.
hail Mary.

In tracing the leading features of the Baptist's character, I find that he is truly great, whether I consider the nature of the ministry he was destined to, the grand preparations made for his discharging it, the manner in which he discharged it, and the manner in which he concluded it. As the ministry of this great saint enters into that plan which was formed by the divine wisdom for the redemption of mankind. I shall endeavour to give you a proper idea thereof by going back to the source, and laying before you in a few words, the gradual progress of religion.

Man by his disobedience had forfeited everlasting happiness, when God in his mercy was pleased
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to promise him a Redeemer, who should reconcile him to his offended maker, and reinstate him in his original birthright. To keep up the knowledge of this Redeemer, a particular people are appointed; in their hands are deposited the sacred writings where the consoling promise stands on record; the most remarkable facts that occur in their history, the greater part of their ceremonies and solemnities have reference to the great Deliverer. And if we take a view of what passes at this time in other nations, we see divine Providence commanding empires to raise and fall, and the most desirable of all events, the coming of the Man God upon earth to efface the sins of mankind. Him, the Prophets set up by God for the instruction of his people, have constantly in view; they describe sometimes obscurely, sometimes more clearly the several circumstances of his birth, life and death, and raised the highest expectations in the minds of the Jews, who were convinced, that the Messiah was to spring from them, and that this circumstance alone, was sufficient to distinguish them from all the nations of the earth. But now, no Prophet appears in Israel for a series of years; God seems to forget his chosen people when he favours them. Behold at that time when vice from all parts of the world, cried to heaven for vengeance, he displays all the riches of his mercy, in sanctifying the earth by the presence of his only begotten Son, and that of his holy Precursor. Yes, Christians, the Baptist is intimately connected with the Saviour. He is sent by God to bear testimony to the desired of nations. He is sent not to announce him at a distance, nor to shadow him out in types and figures, but to point him out clearly and without disguise, as already come and in the midst of his people.

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In this grand procession of teachers divinely commissioned, you may observe that the Baptist comes next to the person of our Redeemer, and is therefore to be considered as higher in rank and dignity than all those who walked before him. Accordingly our Saviour styles him a prophet, and more than a prophet, because he has a clearer and more distinct knowledge of the mystery of our redemption, than any of the prophets: and the very nature of his ministry gives him a superiority over them all. If we consult the Prophets themselves, we shall find, that the Prophet Isaiah describes him in characters, which the Baptist applies to himself in the Gospel: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. In the prophecy of Malachy, the Almighty is introduced speaking of him in an emphatical manner, when he says: Behold I send my Angel, and he will prepare the way before me. Here we may observe, that the prophets allude to those messengers, whom princes on their journies send before them to see that the road should be levelled, and every thing removed that might obstruct their passage. Thus the Baptist is sent as a heavenly messenger to prepare the way of the Lord, to bring men to a true sense of their sins, and dispose them for receiving the salvation which Christ brought them. He is chosen by God to be the herald of the world's Redeemer, the voice to announce to men the eternal Word; the morning star to usher in the sun of Justice. By virtue of his divine commission, he closes the Old law, and opens the New; he lays the foundation of the empire of Jesus Christ upon earth. How glorious are these functions. How grand the preparations made for his discharging them. In vain old age and barrenness seems to conspire against the decrees of heaven. The Lord stretches forth his powerful right hand, and distinguishes

guishes his holy servant by a series of wonders. The same Archangel that announces the birth of Jesus, announces the birth of the Baptist, and the same divine spirit that forms Jesus in the womb of Mary, sanctifies the Baptist in the womb of Elizabeth. O infant, darling of heaven, how early you began to bear testimony of the truth. As yet unborn you behold Christ: you have not as yet seen the light with your corporal eyes, but you see him present, who is the true light of the world; shut up in the prison of your mother's womb you joyfully spring to receive your Lord, to pay him the first homage of love and adoration. And now the time is come, when this miraculous child is to gladden the hearts of the faithful by his birth; a name is given him expressive of the fullness of grace with which he was replenished: his father's tongue, which diffidence in God's promise had tied up, is set loose to celebrate the divine praise; in profound sentiments of love and thanksgiving he proclaims the infinite mercy with which God was pleased to visit his people Israel, and the nations that were seated in darkness and in the shades of death.

They, who were witness of so many prodigies, cry out with astonishment: What do you think this child shall be, for the hand of the Lord was with him. One would imagine that this favourite of the Almighty, who was sanctified in his mother's womb, and in whom the gifts of the Holy Ghost grew up with his years, did not stand in need of penitential austerities. And yet, what is that man in the wilderness, clothed with the rough hair of a camel, living on locusts and wild honey; not allowing himself bread, wine, or any strong drink; of whom our Saviour says, that he neither eat, nor drank, because his life quite different from that of other men, was a continual fast and perpetual martyrdom?

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Great Saint, why do you punish yourself with much severity? The divine Spirit has early cleansed your soul from the stain of original guilt; there he constantly dwelt; there he beheld a plentiful encrease of virtue and merit. And thus, in obedience to holy inspirations, you secure to yourselves those valuable blessings, by flying to the desert. Is not this enough without condemning ourselves to a life so extremely rigorous? But when, these rigours are salutary ones; they draw down from heaven, constant supplies of grace; they dispose this preacher of penance for the functions of his ministry; they inspire the Jews with that awe and veneration for him, which powerfully contributed to the success of his labours, and, what more immediately regards ourselves, they are enough to confound us, when we take a view of the striking contrast between the forerunner of Christ and Christ's followers. Yes, Christians, how many of you are daily adding sin to sin, and doing nothing to appease the divine wrath provoked against you? The Baptist, that constant object of God's complacency, embraces fasting, mortification and self-denial: While many of you, who are objects of God's indignation, lead a life of ease, luxury and extravagance. The Baptist makes war against the flesh, and keeps his senses in perfect subjection; but you are slaves to the flesh and to the concupiscence thereof: you endeavour to gratify your senses in every thing, even when you think of doing something to discharge the great debt you have contracted. Do you not endeavour to make the matter as easy to yourselves as possible, not considering, that you must satisfy the divine Justice to the last farthing; and that there ought to be a certain proportion between your numberless offences, and the reparation that is due for them? What shall you say for yourselves, when the Judge of the living and the dead shall produce

produce St. John as a witness against you, and your sinful unmortified lives oppose the holy penitential life of the Baptist? Now while you have time, attend to what he so strongly inculcates both by word and example: Do penance.

I shall endeavour, Christians, to lay before you in a few words, the whole extent of your obligations. You know, that the Baptist was sent into the world to bear testimony to the truth; you are convinced that he faithfully acquitted himself of that duty. The true method of honouring the saints is to imitate their virtues, and nothing can be more agreeable to the preacher of penance, than that you who are in a particular manner under his protection, endeavour to lead lives according to his instructions, and to the example he sets before you. It is true, Christians, that the Almighty God does not require of you, to quit the lawful employment you are engaged in, and retire to the wilderness as he did. On the contrary, he commands you, faithfully to discharge every branch of your temporal occupations; this is a duty you owe to God, to the public, to yourselves, and to your families. At the same time, his will is that you fly the occasions of sin; that you disengage your hearts from the ties of the world; that you preserve your souls from the infections of evil communication. Learn then, Christians, to form an interior solitude within your hearts, where you may converse familiarly with your Maker; learn then to live in the world so as not to be slaves to it, and to possess the things of the world, so as not to be possessed or captivated by them. Although the Scriptures be silent on many other virtues which this great saint, wrapped up in holy solitude, concealed from the eyes of men; we may easily conceive, that he was eminent for the practice of them all; and that the desert which was always fruitful in saints, en-

ed him with fully qualified. The public bears on the penance, and a iniquity: by sanctity from all passions, and was only a displays. delivers, characters, of those who proves the warns the justice and and oppressions divine judgment themselves. What an idleness, ministry, who representing himself of his sin the Baptist acts the condescension declines when he received humility gives the solicitous we shall find to promote but as the Lord of the world who so far exceeds the Judge was not worthy.

ed him with such treasures of grace and merit, as fully qualified him for the great work that he was sent. The time is come, appointed by heaven, for the public exercise of his holy functions; he appears on the banks of the Jordan, preaching penance, and a true change of heart to a people full of iniquity: When behold, struck at his extraordinary sanctity, the multitudes pour in upon him from all parts, make a public declaration of their sins, and receive the baptism of penance, which was only a preparation for the baptism of Christ. He displays, with heavenly wisdom, the instructions he delivers, which are exactly suited to the several characters, to the respective states and conditions of those who appear before him. He sharply reproves the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; he warns the publicans or tax gatherers against injustice and extortion; the soldiers against violence and oppression; he exhorts them all to avert the divine judgments, reform their lives and dispose themselves for the blessings held out to them. What an idea must we form to ourselves of his ministry, when we see the Son of the living God presenting himself as a sinner to receive the baptism of his servant? Observe, Christians, how the Baptist acts on this occasion: He is astonished at the condescension of the Man God; he starts back, he declines the honour that is offered him; but when he receives the positive orders of his Master, humility gives way to obedience. If Jesus Christ be solicitous to raise the reputation of the Baptist we shall find the Baptist on all occasions zealous to promote the glory of Christ. He points him out as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world; as the author of grace; as one who so far exceeded him in power and dignity, as the Judge of the living and dead, that he was not worthy to do for him the meanest offices.

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What a remarkable proof he gives of his humility and constant attachment to his divine Master when the Jews send an embassy to him, and are ready to acknowledge him for the Messiah? As soon as he sees the injury offered to his God; he shudders at the thought; he is seized with an holy indignation; he assures them repeatedly that he is not the Christ. Far from assuming what he has no right to, he even declines what he might justly challenge as his due. Did not our Saviour declare, that he was a prophet, and more than a prophet, that he was an Elias, that he was animated with the spirit of Elias? And yet he denies his being either the one or the other? But you will say, does not the account which the Baptist gives of himself contradict that which our Saviour gives of him? No, Christians, the Baptist was indeed an Elias in spirit, being the great forerunner of the Son of God, but he was not Elias in person, he was more than a prophet by the nature of his office, as he pointed out Christ present among men; but as he was not a prophet in the strict sense of the word, he rejects the title. What then does he say for himself? I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: A mere voice that is to shew his humility, and to be attended to only on account of the meaning it conveys and the object it signifies. Considered as to myself I am nothing; I came into the world to bear testimony to another who is infinitely superior to me.

In a word, Christians, he is entirely taken up with lessening his own reputation and raising that of our blessed Redeemer; he sends those he has baptized, to receive from Christ a baptism more powerful and efficacious than his own; he sees with joy the glory of the Man God shine forth more powerfully every day, and eclipse his own; his disciples, who were jealous of the superiority of Christ over their master he sends to Christ

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himself, in order that his sacred presence, his heavenly conversation and the miracles that he wrought, may induce them to follow him, who was the Way, the Truth and the Life: but the more the Baptist humbles himself, the more attentive our Saviour is to celebrate his praise. How nobly he extols his merit, when he addresses himself to the surrounding multitude? What went you out into the desert to see, was it a reed shaken with the wind? A fickle inconstant man, not to be depended on in the time of trial. Oh no! he is a true and faithful servant, unavoidably attached to me, and not to be separated from me by the fear of danger or any other temptation. Was it a man clothed in fine garments? No, such men are to be found in the palaces of kings, and in the houses of the great. But you saw a mortified man, uniting the purity and innocence of an angel with all the rigours of a penitent. Verily, I say unto you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women, a greater than John the Baptist. These words crown his eulogium, and if we search the whole body of the Scriptures, we will not find so glorious a testimony given to any man. Christians, you are edified by the virtues of this great Saint, who forgets himself, and is entirely taken up with the honour and glory of his divine Master. But how far are you in general from imitating his conduct? Pride and self-love, which bear so great a sway in the heart of man, make you attentive to yourselves and forget your God. You are pleased when your pretended merit is spoken of; when the highest value is set upon it, when you are caressed and esteemed on this account, as if you had it from yourselves, and not from the Giver of all good gifts, to whom all honour and glory is entirely due. You have observed, Christians, in what strong and animated expressions our Saviour praised his

holy servant for his constant attachment to him. Do you find any thing of this in yourselves, do you find, that nothing is able to separate you from your God? Alas you are reeds shaken with every blast of wind; the most trifling temptations often get the better of your strongest resolutions; to day you solemnly promise an exact compliance with your duty, to morrow you break through your engagements, and suffer yourselves to be carried away by the torrent of your passions. If there should happen any disagreeable turn in your affairs; any sudden disappointment; you break out into murmurs and complaints; your temper and countenance betray rage and discontent, and on these occasions, when Christian patience is put to the test, you have no more of the Christian about you, than if you had never heard of Christ or his doctrine. This is not the way to imitate the Baptist, nor to deserve a death like unto his, a death precious in the sight of God and his Angels.

Do not imagine, Christians, that the joy of this great solemnity, shall be interrupted by the tragical scene exhibited at the barbarous entertainment, where the bleeding head of the Baptist is given as a reward to lasciviousness? No; a description of the bloody manner of his death would excite in you sentiments of horror; but to lay before you the cause for which he died, will contribute to your edification. He, who came to bear testimony to the truth, cannot be silent in a crying disorder, of which all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were witnesses, but dare not speak. He appears before a wicked prince who respects his virtue, he speaks to him in a language little known to the proud and imperious, the language of truth and simplicity, he makes vice tremble with his voice. He openly charges him with the scandalous state of incest and adultery, in which he lived. The proud Herod enslaved by his pas-

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sions, cannot think of shaking off the yoke; he considers the holy austere life of the Baptist, as a reproach to his own vicious dissolute one; he is glad to have him removed from his presence, and condemns the man of God to a loathsome dungeon. Here with what joy did the holy sufferer await the happy stroke, which was to separate him for ever from a world he was perfectly disengaged, and to unite him to his God, who was the end of all his labours?

Christians, we have gone through the principal things related in the Gospel of this great servant of God; we have taken a view of his principal virtues, his penitential spirit, his humility, and his constant attachment to his divine Master. We have also taken notice of the cause of his death, which was nothing else but his zeal in extirpating vice and promoting the glory of his Maker. Let us reflect for a moment on what has been said. You must allow, that the life and death of the Baptist were such as to lead him to everlasting happiness, and raise him to a distinguished rank among the saints. When you look back at his life, what do you see but long retirement, rigorous fasting, all kind of mortification, a compound of every thing that is disagreeable to flesh and blood? As to his death, it is a violent one, received from the hands of a ruffian whom Herod sends to execute his barbarous commands. You see innocence and sanctity treated in this manner, and will you, sinners, complain, when crosses and disappointments come in your way? You glory in being the disciples of a crucified God, and will you refuse to bear that small portion of sufferings, which he sends you for your greater merit. Be assured, that you must have a share in his sufferings, if you mean to share in his glory.

Let us now send up our petitions to the Father of mercies, and implore the assistance of his all
powerful

powerful grace, to support us in the faithful observance of our religious and civil duties. If at any time he suffers the winds and waves to roughen the world with storms, he knows when to command their rage, and restore a perfect calm. In him let us place all our hopes, and we shall never be confounded. O divine Redeemer, enable us weak and wretched creatures to go on in that narrow way, in which you and your holy Precursor have walked before us. May his merits united to your most glorious ones plead strongly in behalf of a people, who look up to him with a particular veneration. May we lead the lives of humble penitents; may we be constantly attached to your holy service. Then may we expect after light and momentary tribulations, to be put in possession of that eternal weight of glory, which you reserve for those, that model their lives on your example and the examples of your saints. Amen.

SERMON

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S E R M O N XXII.

ON THE FEAST OF SAINT MICHAEL.

There was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his Angels fought with the Dragon, and the Dragon fought and his Angels: And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.
Apoc. xii. 7, 8.

TO raise your thoughts above this material world, and bear you on the wings of contemplation to the world of spirits; to display before you the riches of the divine goodness in rewarding Michael and his faithful Angels, the terrors of the divine justice in punishing Lucifer and his rebel associates; to make you aspire to that glory which the former enjoy, and which the latter have forfeited, is the main object of this day's solemnity. You are too reasonable, Christians, to expect an adequate idea of a subject, such as the present is, involved in many awful obscurities. Nor who would believe, if he were not assured of it by the testimony of God himself, that there ever was a contest in heaven, or that any creature however perfect, would presume to rival the Omnipotent.

Omnipotent. But as the fact stands on record in the sacred Oracles, all our reasonings on it must bow down to the infallible authority of divine revelation. In this, and in many other points, we experience the truth of what St. Paul tells us, when he says: That in this life we know only in part, that we see through a glass in an obscure manner; the full manifestation of the ways of God is reserved for that bright day, when we shall see him face to face, and such as he is. This imperfect knowledge is best suited to our present state of trial and imperfection. However, a gleam of light forces its way through the cloud that hangs over us, and accordingly, from the memorable, but mysterious transaction, which is now before us, we may draw several conclusions tending to our religious improvement. Now, one of the most obvious of them is, that all creatures, who are capable of paying a rational homage to the Almighty, ought to humble themselves before the throne of his majesty, acknowledge their total dependance on him, and send back to him thanks and praises for the good things they receive at his hands. If they do not, his vengeance will fall heavy on them, and as they refused to contribute to his glory by a voluntary submission, he will force them to contribute thereto by the dreadful punishments inflicted on them. Is not the proud Lucifer a striking instance of this truth. He who was the most perfect of all creatures rises in rebellion against his Creator; this bright star is dazzled at the glory and splendour which surround him; he would fain eclipse the Divine Sun that formed him. St. Michael cannot bear the insolence of this servant, who puts himself in competition with his sovereign, he signalizes himself in the cause of his divine Master; he bids defiance to the usurper, and gains a complete victory over him.

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him. Thus Lucifer and his apostate angels are hurled into the bottomless abyss, buried with all their glory in the shades of eternal night, and consigned to the mansions of endless wo and despair. Michael and his faithful Angels are confirmed in grace and in glory, and established for ever in the secure enjoyment of unutterable bliss.

You see, Christians, the dreadful consequences of pride, and the blessed fruits of humility, pride is defeated, and humility triumphs. This must ever be the case. For, the general order established by God requires, that the proud be confounded, and the humble exalted. You expect, after the short period of your mortal lives, to fill the places of the fallen Angels: but you must be convinced, that pride, which made them fall, cannot be the means of conducting you to heaven. No; you must be humble in this life, if you mean to rise to eternal glory in the next. You must imitate the chief of the heavenly host, whom the Church honours on this day, you must fight under his banners, and wage an eternal war against the demon of pride. The subject, considered in this point of view, will prove a source of instruction to you. For if you once dislodge pride from your hearts, and establish humility in its stead; you banish every vice, and introduce every virtue. I shall therefore endeavour, with the divine assistance, to shew you in the following discourse how odious pride is to God; how pernicious to ourselves, this shall be the subject of the first part. On the other hand how pleasing humility is to God, how profitable to ourselves will be the subject of the second; I shall conclude with a few reflections on the peculiar veneration you ought to have for the glorious Archangel, whose festival we celebrate.

O Lord

O Lord of hosts, whose battles St. Michael fought; thou art pleased, that we honour him on earth, whom thou hast highly honoured in heaven. He stood foremost in thy cause. May we ever prove ourselves thy faithful servants, and never withdraw our allegiance from thee. May we never take part with the enemy of our souls. May the fall of the proud Lucifer warn us of the dangers inseparable from pride. May the humility of the glorious St. Michael teach us vile worms of the earth, to humble ourselves in thy fight. We beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of the most humble of virgins, who though inferiour to the Angels in the order of nature, is superior to them in the order of grace, and raised above them all to an eminent degree of glory. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

How odious pride is to the Almighty appears from the fate of Lucifer and his apostate angels who instead of being the ornaments of the heavenly Jerusalem, are doomed to be the wretched inhabitants of those regions of sorrow, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. To form a judgment of their fall, it may be necessary to take notice of the peculiar dignity and excellence of their nature. It is true, that even the brute and inanimate part of the creation bear evident traces of the workmanship of an Almighty hand. But these are only rough sketches if compared to his other works. Man rises higher in the scale of existence, as an intelligent rational creature. In the chain of beings, he is the link between the spiritual and the material world. By his body he is allied to matter, by his soul to pure spirits. Now, from our acquaintance with sensible objects and from the weakness of our imaginations, we

re apt to represent the angels to ourselves under sensible appearances, and to give them bodies. And yet they are simple uncompounded beings entirely disengaged from matter: they consequently bear a resemblance to God himself, who is a pure spirit. It follows of course, that the stamp of the divine original was more strongly impressed on them than on any other creatures. They were therefore the master-piece of the creation, and as perfect images of the divinity as pure creatures could be. But whatever prerogatives they enjoyed, it is certain, that God created them in a state meriting an increase of happiness, or of forfeiting it through their own fault. They were free to adhere to him, or separate themselves from him, to pay him the homage of their adoration, or refuse it to him. Everlasting rewards, or punishments were to be the necessary consequence of the good or bad use they would make of their liberty. You see then, Christians, how great their dignity was at the first instant of their creation: but alas! their own beauty and excellence proved the occasion of their ruin. They valued themselves on their perfections, as if they had them from themselves; they did not refer them to the great source and principle of perfection. Lucifer in particular, being himself adorned with so many gifts of nature and grace, feels a secret complacency in them; then openly rebels against his Creator; he says the fullness of his pride: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne, and I will be like the Most High. But how speedy, how dreadful his fall! He and the companions of his revolt, the angels of darkness, the only distinction he can boast of is, that he is the prince of the infernal spirits. Now, Christians, can you imagine that God, who so severely punished pride in his angels, will excuse it in man who is but dust and ashes? If this were the case, what would become of his justice?

justice? You must then be convinced that the pride of man is an abomination in the sight of the Lord, and consequently draws down the divine wrath and indignation on his head. This is the truth, which reason enlightened by revelation sets before you in the clearest point of view. Pride is a false esteem of our own excellence. The proud man, therefore, takes pleasure in thinking himself to be something more than God has made him, and in being thought by others to be better than he really is. It would be endless to quote all the passages of holy Writ in which the Almighty declares how much he detests pride. Nabuchodonosor, taking a view of the city of Babylon, and transported with the idea of the conquests he made and of the glory he acquired, cried out: Is not this the great Babylon which I have built in the strength of my power, and made the seat of my empire? Scarce had he said these words when a messenger from heaven comes to him and says: Thy kingdom shall pass away from thee, and they shall cast thee out from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and thou shalt eat grass like an ox, and seven years shall roll over thy head, till thou know, that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he pleases. Christians, was not this a severe blow of the divine Justice, at the same time it was a salutary one; It opened the eyes of this king who was infatuated with a false notion of his own greatness, he praised and glorified God, he declared, that it was the duty of all men to bend the knee before the King of kings and pay homage to his sovereign Majesty. How many imitate the pride of this king, who do not imitate his repentance. How many, forgetful of God, attribute their success in the world to their address and abilities, to their own good sense and cleverness? In consequence of the high opinion

they entertain of their merit, their discourse generally turns on themselves; they will tell you what they have done, what they can do, and what they mean to do. If you believe them, they are the light of the city, and particularly of the neighbourhood they are in; they are consulted as so many oracles. Nothing of any moment can be done without them. They advised such and such measures, which proved to be successful; their advice was taken, and then they give you leave to draw the consequence, which no doubt must be entirely in their own favour. In a word, they say so much of themselves, as to be exposed to contempt and derision; and thus it often happens even in this life, that pride is its own punishment.

This vain confidence in our own power, strength and abilities must be highly displeasing in the sight of God, as appears from the memorable instance of Sennacherib king of Assyria, who came against Jerusalem with a mighty army. Observe with what impiety and blasphemy he boasts in his menacing letter to king Ezechias: Let not thy God deceive thee, in whom thou confidest, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given up into the hands of the king of the Assyrians. Behold, thou hast heard all that the kings of the Assyrians have done to all countries, which they have destroyed, and canst thou be delivered? Have the Gods of the nations delivered them, whom my fathers have destroyed? But lo! Almighty in punishment of his pride sends his destroying Angel, who in one night slew in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty thousand men, and Sennacherib departed, returned, and dwelt in Ninive, and as he was worshipping in the temple of his false God, he fell by the sword of his own sons. You see then, Christians, what it is to depend entirely on ourselves, if we could ensure success without the blessing of heaven. This great king had immense riches,
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a powerful army, all human means in his favour but he was proud, and consequently, God was against him. Now, if from the Old Testament we pass on to the New, does it appear, that our Saviour who was meek and humble of heart spared pride wherever he found it? On the contrary, he thunders against the pride of the Pharisee, who by the reputation of their sanctity were become the idols of the Jewish people. How often does he charge them with praying at the corners of the streets that they may be seen by men, and proclaiming their almsdeeds by sound of trumpet. Does he not call them ornamented sepulchres, without but foul and corrupt within. Does he not denounce many woes against them, and say, that they have already received their reward on earth and consequently have none to expect in heaven. What a lively picture he gives us of their false confidence in themselves, and contempt of others in the parable of the Pharisee, who went to the temple to pray, or rather to display his own merits. I give thee thanks, O God, says he, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust adulterers, as also is this Publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. Observe, Christians, how clear-sighted he is with regard to the faults of others, and how blind to his own; he sees nothing in himself but what is praise-worthy, he sets the highest value on his own merits. Here I cannot avoid saying a few words on the humble Publican. What a striking contrast between him and the proud Pharisee. The Publican stands at a distance penetrated with a sense of his unworthiness. With downcast eyes he implores forgiveness, and strikes his breast saying: God be merciful to me a sinner. And what is the consequence? The Almighty looks down on him with a favourable eye on him, who would not so much as look up to heaven; he grants him that

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ardon which he was almost ashamed to ask, and thought himself unworthy to receive. But the Pharisee, with all his pretended sanctity, with all his boasted good works, is an object of malediction in the sight of God, who pronounces against him sentence of eternal reprobation. Beware then, Christians, of the pride of the Pharisees, value not yourselves on your good works, which are only the gifts of God, and remember that the more you have received, the more shall be required of you. I shall produce another instance of the dangerous consequences of pride. It is taken from the first epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. This great apostle, speaking of the heathen philosophers, says, that though they knew God, they glorified him not as they ought. They assumed to themselves the name of wisemen, but they became fools; their hearts were darkened, and they lost themselves in their vain thoughts. Therefore, they were delivered up to a reprobate sense, to their own desires and shameful affections: abandoned by heaven they plunged themselves into all the disorders of impurity. O my God, how terrible are thy judgments! How are they fallen whose genius soared high! The reason is obvious; intoxicated by their learned pride, they fancied themselves superior to the rest of men, and therefore the Almighty permitted them to fall into an abyss of iniquity, to teach the world what a wretched creature man is when left to himself.

And now, Christians, will you after so dreadful example value yourselves on your learning, wit, genius, or abilities, on your extensive information, on your natural or acquired accomplishments? Do you not know, that these gifts often prove the ruin of those on whom they are bestowed? That God in his wrath grants them to some, and in his mercy refuses them to others. Do you not know, that thousands are burning in hell for having abused

abused them? From what has been said, you may conclude, that pride is most odious in the sight of God; it must therefore be pernicious and destructive to man. The proud man forgets his subjection to God, and his total dependance on him; he robs God of that glory which essentially belongs to him, and of which he is so jealous as to declare that he will not give it to another. The natural and immediate consequence is, that the wrath of heaven is kindled against him, that the special protection of providence is withdrawn from the wretch, who presumes too much on his own strength. And therefore, when temptations rush upon him, he is defenceless and unarmed; he must inevitably fall; for the hand of the Lord is not with him. A man of this stamp is not inclined to brook to the humiliating, and painful observances of his holy religion, he is self-sufficient; he wants neither advice nor direction, and because he is clear-sighted in worldly matters; he thinks that he is equally so in what concerns his spiritual interest. But, let me suppose, that he is prevailed upon to present himself at the tribunal of confession; will he not require certain preference and distinctions in a place, which knows neither favour nor affection; will he not strive to keep up his consequence at that very time, when all his foolish and unmeaning consequence ought to fall to the ground. This is a proof that his pride and vanity have not left him, and can he suppose that pride and vanity will supply the place of humble repentance? The very nature of pride shews, what a dangerous enemy it is to the soul of man. It is a spiritual sin, and therefore its approaches, its attacks and the impressions it makes are almost imperceptible. Other vices disgust you at first sight by their native deformity, they give you fair warning of the advances which they make; but pride lurks in the secret recesses of the heart, and in-

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inuates its pleasing, but deadly poison, till it has corrupted the whole man. If it should enter into our good actions, it kills them in the sight of God. And therefore the best of men must be ever on their guard, lest they be surpris'd by this subtle enemy. Other vices are totally subdued by the contrary virtues which rise on their ruins, but virtue itself may become the fuel and nourishment of pride. You will ask me, where then is the remedy? I will answer, that a sincere and constant humility is essentially opposite to pride. And now I shall proceed to shew you, that nothing can be more pleasing to God than humility, nothing more profitable to ourselves.

THE SECOND PART.

If the punishments inflicted on Lucifer and his rebel angels prove how odious pride is to God, the rewards conferred on Michael and his faithful angels equally prove, that humility is highly pleasing to him. For, when the ringleader of the revolt presumed to rise in opposition to his Sovereign, and affect an equality with the Most High, St. Michael checked his insolence by these few but comprehensive words: Who is like to God? This was his motto when he set up his standard against him: this his very name signifies. How glorious is that name which fully expresses the supreme dominion of God over all creatures, and conveys to us the sentiments of profound humility and adoration, by which St. Michael prostrated himself before the divine majesty. Who is like to God? What are we, what are all creatures if compared to him? O proud spirit, what are all your beauties and perfections, but so many rays of light, issuing from the Father of lights, with whom there is not the shadow of change or vicissitude. He is the king of ages, he was, is, and will be for ever, may all his

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creatures bless and adore him. What were you before he drew you out of the abyfs of nothing? And may he not, if he pleases, in the twinkling of an eye, plunge you back again into your original nothing? But O wretched spirit, immortality shall be your everlasting curse; you shall feel to your cost what it is to bid defiance to the King of heaven. You see, Christians, how nobly St. Michael maintains the incommunicable rights of the God-head; he keeps his faithful angels in that state of subjection and dependance in which they were created; he perfectly humbles himself in the sight of his God; to him he ascribes all honour and glory, and thus by his humility and obedience, he triumphs over the pride and disobedience of the daring usurper.

Now, if the justice of God appears so terrible in the punishment of the proud, who can set bounds to his goodness and magnificence in rewarding the humble? Who then can conceive to what a degree of glory, he has raised this illustrious conqueror, and those happy spirits who supported him in the cause of heaven. All that we can say of it is, that their state of bliss is as unchangeable as God himself, that the power of language sinks beneath it, that the utmost stretch of human imagination cannot reach it; at the same time we are convinced, that the delights of heaven are prepared for us. Therefore, instead of engaging in a task to which we are not equal, let us consider by what means we may be entitled to a share of that happiness which the angels enjoy. Now I say, that humility is one of the most powerful means of attaining this end; for it is highly pleasing in the sight of God, and most profitable to ourselves. It is a virtue, by which a man becomes contemptible in his own eyes from a true knowledge of himself. The humble man is convinced, that of himself he is nothing, but a compound of misery and sin; he

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therefore considers humiliations as his due; he shuns the praise and esteem of men, he ascribes to God the glory of every thing that is good, and in him only he confides. There is not a part of the sacred writings, in which humility is not recommended to us. But the most striking instances of this virtue occur in the New Testament, where our Saviour enforces its necessity both by word and example. You know, that before the descent of the Holy Ghost, the disciples were liable to weaknesses and imperfections. They disputed among themselves for pre-eminence, and thoughts of ambition rose in their hearts. The great Physician of souls wishes to apply a remedy to the disorder. He therefore calls to him a little child, sets him in the midst of them, and says: Verily, I say unto you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Here, Christians, you see the proud levelled to the ground, and sentenced to a total exclusion from the kingdom of heaven; you see the first places in this glorious kingdom allotted to the most humble. You are convinced of the necessity of baptism, of the necessity of repentance: because our Saviour enforces the necessity of these means of salvation in the strongest and clearest terms. You must therefore admit the necessity of humility on the very same grounds; for the passage before you is as clear and as positive, as words can make it. Our Saviour practised what he taught; in every stage of his life we read lessons of humility. Does he not inculcate the necessity of this virtue, in a striking manner, when at the last supper he condescends to wash the feet of his disciples, and conjures them in the most endearing terms to follow his example. Know you, says he, what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and you

say well, for so I am. If then I being your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, thus as I have done to you, so do you also.

Thanks to thee, O blessed Jesus, who hast given us so noble a pattern of humility. Grant us grace to do as thou hast done, and prove ourselves thy true disciples. On no other terms can we expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Oh, Christians, how happy would we be, were we once solidly grounded in the practice of this lovely virtue, a virtue so pleasing to our God, and so profitable to ourselves. Humility is the foundation of the spiritual edifice; in vain you raise the superstructure, if you do not sink the foundation. It is the root of the tree which bears fruit ripe for eternity. Take away humility, and your other virtues are not genuine; they are only appearances, but not realities. It obtains for us all other virtues, it cherishes and preserves them; it conducts them to the last stage of perfection. Is it not humility that gives power and efficacy to prayer, and makes it pierce the clouds. To whom shall I have respect, says the Almighty, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words. The humble man is always diffident of himself; he presumes not on his own strength; he therefore never exposes himself to temptation. But if the unwelcome intruder should come to annoy him, he looks up to heaven for assistance, and obtains it from that God, who is never wanting to those who put their confidence in him. He is all submission and obedience to the divine will, he is ever attentive to the duties of his holy religion; he hears with docility and respect the truths of salvation announced to him by the pastors of the Church; he never sets up his weak reasonings in opposition to that authority, which Jesus Christ has

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so firmly established. In a word, the more humble he is, the more he is like his divine Master, who was meek and humble of heart, who humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross. We must therefore pronounce, that if he advances in humility, he advances in all virtue. What a crown of glory must then be prepared for him at the end of his course?

I believe, Christians, you are convinced of the necessity and advantages of humility: It was the favourite virtue of the Saviour of the world, it ought to be the favourite virtue of man. For, whether we consider him in the order of nature, or in the order of grace, his situation in either of these respects ought to teach him to be humble. He comes into the world in a helpless state with tears in his eyes, sad prelude of the miseries that await him. In his infancy how slow are the advances he makes; in his youth they are more rapid; he grows up and then he ceases to grow. Now he has escaped all the dangers incident to the earlier stages of life, a train of disorders lies in ambush for him; he is encompassed with evils on every side, his decays are daily, though they may be insensible; every moment of his life he exhales a portion of his being; every step he makes is a step towards the grave. At last death treats him like a conquered foe, and tramples him under his foot. What then becomes of all his riches, his sounding titles and empty honours? Alas! after all his pomp, he is the food of worms: and what shall we say of his more noble part, his immortal soul? Is not his mind liable to a thousand errors and illusions, is it not the dupe of its own prejudices? Is not his heart a prey to raging passions, which like so many tyrants tear and devour it? This is a picture of a man in the order of nature, let us now consider what he is in the order of grace. You know, that he brings with him
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into the world that original stain, which makes him an object of malediction in the sight of God; this stain is washed away in the cleansing waters of regeneration. He comes to the use of reason, and the first use he makes of it, is to offend his Creator. He has often forfeited the divine grace. And what assurance has he that he has regained it? Now, without grace he can do nothing; without it he cannot form a thought, nor heave a sigh, nor even pronounce the name of the Lord in a manner available to salvation. But let me suppose, that he is actually in the state of grace; can he answer for himself, that he will continue to be so, that he will persevere to the end; for you know that everlasting happiness is not to be insured on any other terms? Not to be humble in such a situation is to lose all sense of reason and religion.

You see, then, Christians, that reason recommends humility. The arguments she offers are powerful, especially when divine revelation comes in to strengthen and support them. As Christians, you must have taken particular notice of the precepts and example of your blessed Saviour. They both conspire to place this virtue in the most engaging light, and press it upon you in the strongest manner. I have also proposed to you the example of the glorious Archangel, whose festival you celebrate, whom you look up to with a peculiar veneration, whom the Church of Christ has ever honoured as her guardian under God, and protector of the faithful. In this quality he was the defender of the synagogue, as appears from the prophecy of Daniel and Zachary, where he is styled the prince or tutelar Angel of the Jewish nation. From several parts of the divine office it is evident, that he assists the faithful particularly at the awful moment of their departure out of this world, and presents the souls of the just before the throne of God. Accordingly, in those prayers which the

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Church, composed for we recommend, Receive, Let the heavenly meet him, venly Jerusalem, rity which, sidence she You cannot Almighty, tector. Let portion to that you are mean to be banners of your souls, to God. L conveys to is like to G whole world Oh, shall I Shall I fors the simple g gle consider to, would b passions, an But this can the work of to grant th holy grace, to him as such a mann glorious affe st and imp did an etern

Church, ever guided by the Holy Ghost, has composed for the relief and comfort of departing souls; we recommend them to the mercies of their Creator, we also implore the assistance of St. Michael. Receive, O Lord, thy servant into thy kingdom. Let the Archangel St. Michael, the chief of the heavenly host, conduct him; let the holy Angels meet him, and bring him into the city of the heavenly Jerusalem. Here you see the spirit of charity which animates the Church; you see the confidence she places in the patronage of St. Michael. You cannot then sufficiently thank and praise the Almighty, who has given you so powerful a protector. Let your gratitude to heaven rise in proportion to the benefits you receive. Remember that you are engaged in a spiritual warfare; if you mean to be successful you must fight under the banners of St. Michael, and defeat the enemy of your souls, as he did, by humility and obedience to God. Let the great truths which his very name conveys to you sink deep into your hearts: Who is like to God? What will it avail me to gain the whole world, if I lose my soul, if I lose my God: Oh, shall I give up my God for a vile pleasure? Shall I forfeit the eternal delights of heaven for the simple gratifications of a moment? This single consideration, Christians, if properly attended to, would be enough to allay the storms of your passions, and compose your souls to a perfect calm. But this cannot be your own work; it must be the work of God. Let us therefore beseech him to grant that we may faithfully correspond to his holy grace, that we may be humble and obedient to him as St. Michael was, that we may live in such a manner, as to deserve the protection of this glorious assertor of his rights, particularly in those last and important moments, when our souls are to bid an eternal adieu to this world, and take their flight

flight to the world of spirits. Forbid it, heaven, that we should then fall into the hands of our enemies. Arise, O my God, and they shall be scattered. May our happy departure fill the spirits of darkness with shame and confusion, and give joy to the court of heaven. May we celebrate an eternal feast in that delightful place, where God displays his glory and magnificence; may we join the saints and angels in praising and adoring him for ever and ever. Amen.

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S E R M O N XXIII.

ON THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

*Thy friends are exceedingly honoured, O God. Psalm
cxxxviii. 17.*

THUS spoke the royal Prophet, transported with the idea of that happiness which the saints enjoy. Unable to express what he feels, he glorifies God, who so bountifully rewards his faithful servants. Each, Christians, ought our sentiments to be on the eve of that great festival, which the Church has instituted to offer a public homage of praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty, for the virtues and graces with which he has adorned his saints, and for the glory with which he has crowned them. There cannot be a more solid, nor a more rational devotion. In this and in all other festivals of the saints, God is the only object of supreme worship. He has been pleased to communicate to his saints such a portion of glory, as is suitable to them. We admire the riches of his goodness in the supernatural gifts, with which he has favoured his chosen friends. When therefore we honour the saints, in them we honour God, who is the author
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of their sanctity, whose grace has made them what they are. Their virtues are so many copies taken from the divine original; their merits so many streams flowing from the great source of all that is good. But, Christians, you must not content yourselves with a barren, fruitless admiration of the virtues of the saints, for this would have no practical influence on your conduct: this would not be to enter into the spirit of the Church, which earnestly wishes to renew those happy times of primitive Christianity, when almost every Christian was a saint. Is it not for this reason that she proposes to you the example of so many illustrious conquerors, and lays the heavenly Jerusalem open to your view? In order to answer her pious intentions, I shall endeavour, with the divine assistance, to lay before you in the following discourse such reflections, as may be most capable of promoting your spiritual welfare. I shall observe to you, that the example of the saints ought to animate you in the pursuit of the happiness, which they enjoy: this shall be the subject of the first part. The example of the saints points out to you the means, by which you may attain to it, will be the subject of the second.

O God, who art wonderful in thy saints, place our confidence in that stupendous and adorable mercy, which thou hast displayed in their favour. We hope, through the merits of our Redeemer, that thou wilt admit us to a share in their bliss. But now, engaged in a state of warfare and surrounded with dangers, we look up to thee for help and protection. Raise us then, O Lord, from our spiritual miseries; fill our hearts with an holy emulation, and grant us grace to imitate thee, whom we revere. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, who having been chosen to be the mother of the eternal Word, and distinguished by

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world all creatures here on earth, is raised above all the saints to an eminent degree of glory in heaven. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

It has been often and justly observed, that nothing more powerfully sways the heart of man than example. Hence it follows, that as bad example is a dangerous temptation, which leads numbers astray, and ruins them for ever; so good example in the hands of God a strong and victorious force, by which sinners are brought back to a sense of their duty, and conducted to eternal life. Now, Christians, your misfortune is, that you live in the midst of a corrupt world, where the contagion of vice is universally spread. All ages, sexes, and conditions feel the baneful influence. There are certain situations in life, where disorders and diseases are so common, that one would imagine they were almost inseparably annexed to them. Many are the scandals sown in the field of the church, and great is the harvest of iniquity which they yield. What a relief then must it be to a Christian soul, from this scene of desolation which forms the world, to look up to that fair and bright prospect, which the heavenly Jerusalem exhibits to her view? Here she beholds the saints clothed with robes of immortality, and reigning with Christ; she sees their different degrees of glory crowned by a just and merciful God; she sees them sanctified by as many virtues, as there are vices in the world. Men, who were rich here on earth, are now in full possession of the riches of heaven; they were faithful stewards of their temporal possessions; they took care to send before them a part of their perishable riches to that place, where the rust doth not consume, nor the moth corrupt. Men, who were great and powerful in this

this life, are now raised to immortal honours: in the most exalted stations they were perfectly humble; they were strangers to that pride which worldly grandeur commonly inspires. Men, who were poor here below, and the outcasts of the world, are now seated on thrones of glory, and replenished with inexpressible delights. They were perfectly resigned to the will of God; they were happy in that state, which the Saviour of the world consecrated by his example. Christians, when we indulge contemplations of this kind, do not amuse ourselves with abstract speculative notions of sanctity. No; she presents to us living images of herself; she appears in a visible shape and seems to say to us, what God said to Moses when he shewed him the figure of the tabernacle. Look on, and do according to the model which I have given you. But in order to bring this instruction home to you, and reduce it to a proper level, I shall not now consider the saints such as they are in those regions of bliss, where they enjoy an uninterrupted calm: free from all the miseries of this life, they have no more toils or conflicts to undergo. This, Christians, is the reward of their merit; but it is not here their merit lies: this is not what the saints are in heaven; but it is not what they were on earth. We are now in a land of exile, in a state of probation; let us therefore examine what was the conduct of the saints, when they were in the same situation with ourselves. I shall not even consider what they were at the end of their career, in the last stage of Christian perfection, when by repeated victories over themselves their senses were brought under perfect subjection, when charity meeting no obstacle reigned in their hearts without controul.

I shall examine what they were on their first setting out, when they were making the first advances towards sanctity. For if we except a few

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whom the Almighty early distinguished by extraordinary graces, we shall find a perfect conformity between the saints and ourselves. They were frail men as we are, subject to the same imperfections; their minds liable to error, their hearts prone to corruption, they were the work of nature, before they were sanctified by grace; they were degraded children of Adam, before the divine Spirit breathed on them, and made their souls so many temples, in which he chose to dwell. Many of them were noted for their vices and disorders; they bore for years the yoke of the world, before they put on the yoke of Jesus Christ; they were great saints because they became great penitents. Let us not fear, Christians, to mention the weaknesses to which the saints were liable, during a part of their mortal lives. No; this would be a mistaken respect. Was not their frailty the matter of those victories which have gained them immortal crowns? Yes, O my God, it was fit that the power of your grace should be manifested in them, that the edifice of sanctity should be raised on the ruins of sin. It was always the peculiar glory of our holy religion to form virtues, which the world with all its boasted wisdom could never produce. The result of what has been said is simply this: If you do not strive to imitate the saints; if you take no pains to save your souls, or in other words, to be saints, their example silences all your pretences, and leaves you without any excuse. If you tell me, that you are weakness itself, that you are a prey to raging passions, that you are engaged in criminal habits and cannot break your chains, I will ask you: Were not the saints made of the same mould with you? Had they no difficulties to counter, no passions to wage war against, no evil habits to overcome? Consider, what a long and painful conflict St. Augustine had to undergo, before he became a perfect convert to the grace of Jesus

Jesus Christ. Weak and undetermined, he almost despairs of ever conquering a host of passions armed against him. A sense of his miseries draws sighs from his heart, and tears from his eyes; but how vain are sighs and tears when they produce no fruits of repentance! He wishes to be free; but he is kept fast bound, as he himself expresses it, not with exterior chains or irons, but by his own iron will. His desires of conversion are like the feeble efforts of a man, who would wish to arise from sleep, but suffers himself to be overcome with drowsiness, and falls back into his former slumber. Who then can rescue him from so wretched a slavery? He who could save him from the jaws of death, and looks on him with an eye of pity. A heavenly voice sounds in his ears: Augustine, shall not you be able to do, what so many persons of both sexes have done? These few words are like many rays of light, which dart conviction into his soul. He is changed at once; he is a new man instead of being a rebel to grace, he becomes her obedient child, her most zealous defender. Now, sinner, let me ask you: Are your passions, are your evil habits stronger than his were? Do you feel that violent struggle between corrupt nature and grace, which this great saint experienced within himself? But though you did, is not that grace which triumphed over the passions of St. Augustine, able to triumph over you? Is she not able to beat down all the opposition, which corrupt nature and all the enemies of your salvation can give her? Why then do you lose courage? Did not your Saviour shed his blood for you? Have you not the promise of God engaged to you, that he will not suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength? Are not these consoling words addressed to all men without exception: Seek, and you shall find; ask, and you shall receive; knock, and the door shall be opened to you? Has not your heaven

Physician

Physician left remedies enough to heal the wounds of your souls? Are not the channels of grace open to you every day? In these sacred streams which flow from the wounds of Jesus, you may wash away all your iniquities; you may rise pure and sound from that spiritual leprosy which disfigures you. You see, that you have the same means of salvation, which the saints had. What hinders you then from saving your soul, from becoming a saint? Consider, Christians, that if you do not attend to the lessons which the saints give you, if your conduct be quite contradictory to theirs, if you continue to run headlong to your own destruction, their example which is now laid before you shall appear in judgment against you. What will you say for yourselves, when the searcher of hearts shall make you read your own condemnation in the contrast? He will shew you between your sins and the lives of his saints, when he shall contrast their virtues and your vices, their zeal, their activity in his holy service, and your criminal indolence and insensibility. Thus a cloud of witnesses shall be raised against you, who will cover you with inexpressible confusion.

Now, Christians, while you have time, hasten to prevent so dreadful an evil. If, when you look back at your past conduct, you find no resemblance between the Saints and yourselves, do not despair on this account. You may, with divine assistance repair the disorders of your souls; you may be sincerely converted; you may become Saints. Their example ought to animate you to walk in their footsteps and aspire to the same glory: It also points out to you the means, which you may attain to it.

THE SECOND PART.

Christians, nothing can be more to your purpose, than to be acquainted with the science of the saints, other sciences may be useful in the world; but this is the only one that can lead you to eternal happiness. Was it not to teach men this solid and sublime science, that the Eternal Word was pleased to descend from the throne of his glory, and to consecrate the earth by his presence? For this, the Apostles were divinely inspired, and replenished with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, that they might impart this saving knowledge to all those, who would profess the faith of Jesus Christ. Now, Christians, you take the saints for your masters in the science of salvation, and for guides in the way to eternal happiness, you cannot go astray. You will find, that one of their leading maxims, which served to regulate their conduct, was, that they were not obliged to look for sanctity out of that state of life, in which divine providence had placed them. On the contrary, they were convinced, that sanctity consisted in faithfully discharging the several duties annexed to their respective situations in life. This maxim is strictly conformable to reason; it is also supported by the authority of Holy Writ. Jesus Christ came to destroy, but to perfect the world; not to disturb the order of society, but to unite the members thereof in the bonds of that divine charity, which makes us consider every son of Adam as our brother. He came to form to himself families out of the different degrees and orders of mankind. Accordingly, his grace adapts itself to our characters, ranks, and conditions. His will is, that we sanctify ourselves, and for this purpose

He has prepared particular graces which are suited to our several employments in life. This is the instruction which St. Paul delivers to the Corinthians, when he says; Let every one of you remain with God in that state in which he has been called.

Here, Christians, you are to observe, that the Apostle addresses himself to persons who were late converted to Christianity, and who before their conversion had their several places in the world allotted to them. He does not desire them to quit the lawful professions they were engaged in, but to do for God, what they before did for the world. He proves to them, the obligation they were under of uniting the maxims of the Gospel with the duties, which they owed to society. Thus, Christians, have the saints reasoned, and if we be wise, we will reason in the same manner. But, instead of this, how many are constantly finding fault with that state of life, in which the hand of God has placed them? Oh! say they, we are subject to a thousand distractions! the hurry of business and the cares of the world take up every moment of our time, and in the midst of all this, how is it possible for us to attend the duties which religion prescribes? Oh! if we were once disengaged from the ties of the world, how happy should we be to devote ourselves to God, and spend the remainder of our days in holy retirement. This is a dangerous illusion, when you are at this rate, you arraign Providence for the faults which you commit, and for which you will render a strict account. When you fancy yourselves other situations in life more favourable to salvation, you only form to yourselves castles in the air, which you will never carry into execution: instead of endeavouring to sanctify

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yourselves, you are only wishing to be what you are not, and what you never will be. You are like reeds shaken with every blast of wind; your minds are uneasy; your thoughts unsettled, and you neglect to do, what God actually requires at your hands.

Consider, Christians, that whatever advantages may be found in a more perfect state of life you ought not to embrace it without a particular call from the Almighty. If you do, you endanger the salvation of your souls: for then you are not in the order of Providence; God hath other views with regard to you. He hath therefore prepared certain graces to sanctify you in that state, in which you are actually engaged, and not in that, which you suppose to be the best and the most desirable for you. But, you will say, have not the saints quitted the world? have they not done extraordinary things for God, has not God done extraordinary things for them? Yes, Christians, some of the saints quitted the world, when it was evident to them that such was the will of heaven. In this they did not consult self-love, whim, or humour, but they consulted their God, whose commands they immediately obeyed. The Lord was pleased to favour many of them with extraordinary gifts, he enabled them to bear hardships and austerities, the recital of which would be enough to strike us with astonishment. But, I say, that their sanctity did not consist in all this: No, it consisted in a faithful discharge of the duties annexed to their stations in life, and without this they never could have been saints.

From what has been said you will conclude that there are people in the world, who form themselves false notions of sanctity. How many wrong headed persons are apt to consider

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tain pious practices which they are not obliged to, as more meritorious in the sight of God, than the performance of their ordinary duties. Accordingly they neglect what is essential, while they give themselves up to works of supererogation. Thus, for instance, you may see those who are liable to earn their bread, and who might be employed in a manner useful to themselves and to the public, running from chapel to chapel, and making a trade of devotion. One would imagine, that they had a particular call from the Almighty: but the truth is, that their devotion is merely fanciful, and entirely destitute of solidity. They take up not what is most proper for them, or most pleasing to God, but what is most pleasing to themselves. Now, Christians, to be candid with you, I do not think that many of you are here concerned. But what may be justly charged to your account is, a total want of devotion, and of those Christian virtues, by the practice of which the saints have been so eminently distinguished. Where is that humility which the saints laid as the foundation of their sanctity? Where is that obedience to the pastors of the Church, who watch over you as being to render an account of your souls? On the contrary, what is more common in our days than a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, which would shake off the yoke of that authority which Jesus Christ has so firmly established? Accordingly, when you are exhorted in the mildest terms to attend to the interests of your souls, and to comply with the solemn and essential duties of your religion, at once you feel yourselves hurt; you answer in the fullness of your pride: I am able to judge for myself; I do not want advice or direction. Christians, what language is this? Would you expect to hear it from any one, who reposes quietly in the bosom of the Church? The fact is, that we have got a set of freethinkers among us, who adopt the religion of the world, which is to

have none at all. I shall now say a few words on an abuse, into which young and inconsiderate persons are apt to fall. This is a time set apart by them for impious practices, in consequence of which they pretend to know, how they are to be disposed of, who is to be their partner in life, what will be his trade, his profession, or employment, with a thousand other fooleries, a detail of which would not become the gravity of the pulpit. What else is this, but to revive the errors of Paganism, to renounce all dependance on Providence, and to dishonour God and his saints?

Christians, I have laid before you what I proposed to myself on the present subject. I have endeavoured to encourage and instruct you by the example of the saints. May the Almighty in his infinite mercy grant, that what I have said, may have the desired effect. For this purpose it would be necessary for you to raise your thoughts now, and then, from this wretched world to that state of glory and immortality, where the saints are perfectly happy. Represent to yourselves these heroes of religion holding out their crowns to you, inviting you to partake in their bliss, and addressing you in the words of St. Paul: Be you imitators of me, even as I am of Christ. Let your hearts burn with an holy desire of being admitted to their blessed society: but let your desires and expectations be reasonable. How can you pretend to the happiness of the saints, if you do not tread in their steps? This grace you may obtain from the Father of mercies. Offer then your supplications to him. Conjure him by the merits of Jesus Christ, by the powerful intercession of all the saints, to support your weakness, to grant you strength and resolution manfully to resist all the enemies of your souls, in order that having gained a complete victory over them, you may receive the great and glorious reward prepared for those who fight and conquer. Amen.

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S E R M O N XXIV.

ON THE WORD OF GOD.

Blessed are they, who hear the word of God, and keep it.
 Luke xi. 28.

OUR Saviour announces to the Scribes and Pharisees the words of eternal life. He displays before them signs and wonders in confirmation of his heavenly doctrine. But alas, blinded by their inveterate prejudices they harden their hearts against the truths he delivers, against the evident proofs of the divine power, by which he enforces them. In the midst of so many unbelievers, a woman appears who signalizes herself by a lively faith, struck at what she hears and sees, she cries out in a transport of admiration, *Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that gave thee suck.* Our Saviour replies: *Yea rather, blessed are they, who hear the word of God, and keep it.* Here Christians, behold, our duty is clearly pointed out to us. We are bound to hear the word of God, and to imitate her in this particular, to imprint the maxims of Jesus Christ on our hearts, and make them bring forth fruits which may flourish to all eternity: this should be the study of every Christian. If we faithfully acquit ourselves

selves of this obligation, we shall be blessed indeed. It is true, all generations shall call the mother of God blessed, in consequence of the unspeakable dignity to which she was raised. But what laid the foundation of her greatness, was her perfect correspondence with the graces which adorned her happy soul, her unwearied assiduity in hearing the words that fell from the lips of her divine Son, and treasuring them up in her heart. To imitate her in this particular is much more to our purpose, than to pronounce elegant encomiums. This is the substance of what our blessed Saviour conveyed to us, in the words of my text. He, who was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, had every right to expect that his creatures would hear with a profound and respectful attention, and religiously observe his heavenly lessons. Now, Christians, the same truths which our Saviour preached, and commanded his Apostles to announce to all nations, are in his name, and by his authority delivered to you by those whom he has called to the ministry of his word, whom he has appointed to cooperate with him in the glorious work of the conversion of the world. But how few frequent the school of Jesus Christ, to be instructed in the science of salvation? How few ever reflect on the obligation they are under of feeding their souls with the bread of the divine word? Even they, who from their station in life are particularly bound to give good example betray a total and habitual neglect of all religious instructions. The evil is not confined to them, it spreads to an alarming degree, and seems to infect all ranks and classes of men. Others come now and then to hear the truths of salvation, when it suits their convenience, when they have no other business on their hands, or when they are attracted by the novelty of the occasion, or by some extraordinary solemnity. With in this few years I have observed, that the gene-
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ality of you have lost all taste and relish for the word of God. Believe me, this is an evident symptom of a bad spiritual constitution; it argues an insensibility to your best and everlasting interests. Again, how few, even, of those who hear the word of God, derive from it those solid advantages that might naturally be expected. This cannot be owing to any want of power and efficacy in that divine word, which has wrought so many wonders in the order of grace, triumphed over the pride and corruption of the human heart, peopled the deserts with saints, tamed and civilized the most barbarous nations, forced the haughty philosopher to bend his neck under the yoke of the Gospel, and raised the standard of the cross on the ruins of idolatry. For, to suppose that the lapse of ages can make any change or alteration in the word of God, would be an error highly injurious to God himself. Why then do we see it so barren and unproductive? How comes it, that so few are converted by it? The reason is obvious. We do not hear it with the proper spirit and dispositions. Now, Christians, in the following discourse my intention is, to address myself to two different descriptions of men; to those who neglect to hear the word of God, and to those who hear it; to convince the former of their obligation and engage them to comply with it: and to point out to the latter the spirit and dispositions in which they ought to hear it. We are strictly bound to hear the word of God shall be the subject of my first part. What are the dispositions required of us in order to hear it to advantage will be the subject of the second part.

O sanctifying Spirit, fruitful source of every grace, vindicate the honour of thy divine word, and rescue it from the contempt with which it is treated by the world. What is the voice of man unsupported by thee, but an empty sound, which
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may strike the ear, but cannot reach the heart. Shed then thy powerful benedictions on those who announce the Oracles of thy eternal Wisdom, and on those who hear them. Enlighten our understandings, that we may clearly see the necessity of treasuring them up in our hearts, and making them fructify to the benefit of our immortal souls. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, thy own chaste and favourite spouse, whose perfect obedience to thy divine word qualified her for the sublime dignity to which she was raised on earth, for that eminent degree of glory to which she is raised in heaven. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

It may at first sight appear extraordinary, that at the close of the eighteenth century, an age generally distinguished by the appellation of *enlightened*, it should be thought necessary to prove to Christians their obligation of hearing the word of God. If our religious improvement kept pace with our general information on other subjects, the necessity would no longer exist. But how often does it happen, that men, who are far from being ignorant, who have even received some advantages of education, have but a faint notion of those truths, which it is of the utmost importance for them to know, and reduce to practice. How many are so taken up with the gratification of their passions, as scarcely to allow themselves time to think of any thing else. Against the indulgence of those passions the word of God wages an eternal war: and they are consequently engaged in an opposite interest. By hearing the word of God and reflecting on it, they might open their eyes to the unhappy state they are in, break their chains and recover their liberty. But their understand-

ings are so blinded by the corruption of their hearts, that far from wishing to see the light, they shut their eyes against it; they hug their chains, and imagine, that to be free from all religious restraints is to enjoy perfect liberty. But religion teaches us, that he, who is under the dominion of sin, is a slave to sin, and groans under the most abject slavery that can possibly be conceived. For, when once a man allows his inordinate passions to gain an ascendancy over him, his heart is not his own; he is no longer master of himself, he is hurried away by a blind, but almost irresistible impulse; he becomes callous and insensible to the most sacred obligations; he urges the most childish pretences, as strong and weighty reasons for remaining in that state of bondage, to which he has reduced himself. Now, if the enormity of his guilt, and the dreadful consequences, to which it leads, were exhibited before him in their genuine colours, if the sword of the divine Justice were presented to his view hanging over him, and suspended by a slender thread; if the fathomless abyss were opened under his feet ready to swallow him up a prey to everlasting flames: Would not the true picture drawn by the word of God make a lively impression on his heart, work him up to a salutary fear, the beginning of wisdom, and extort from him sighs and groans to the throne of grace to obtain his pardon and liberty? By neglecting to hear the word of God, he dooms his soul to die by a spiritual famine, he deprives himself of one of the most powerful means of salvation held out to him by the Father of mercies, who wishes not the death of the sinner, but that he should be converted and live. Others suffer their thoughts to be so engrossed by the concerns of this life, as to forget those of the next: quick and intelligent in the management of worldly business they are qualified to give lessons on the subject. Prosperity swells them into
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a high opinion of themselves: they fancy themselves possessed of a stock of religious information, when perhaps none are more destitute of it. If we take a view of their lives, religion will be found to have very little influence on them. The more they have, the more they covet. To amass and accumulate is their darling passion, to which every thing must bend. The rust of avarice eats up in their hearts the fine feelings of charity and humanity. Hard and unrelenting, they are deaf to the cries and moans of the unfortunate. They convert their trade to this world, and make no provision for the next. Yes; money is the idol to which they sacrifice their souls, their God, and their all. Now, Christians, would not the word of God, if properly attended to, soften their obdurate hearts, melt them into compassion for the distresses of their fellow-creatures, teach them to make a proper use of those perishable riches to which they have chained their affections; disengage them from that wretched passion the source of all their evils, enlarge and expand their minds contracted by self-interest, and raise their thoughts to their God, which before were creeping on the ground. It would be a relief to a man, bewildered, in the midst of the cares and perplexities of the world, to retire now and then from the contagion of sensual disorders, which surround him, and hear from his God the words of truth and life. Would not that humility, so frequently inculcated in the Gospel, so strongly enforced by the example of his divine Master, be a never-failing antidote against that spirit of pride, to which his situation exposes him? He would be no longer a slave to the world, if he seriously considered, how little it avails a man to gain the whole world, if he should lose his own soul. If he allowed himself time to reflect on the frail tenure on which he holds his possession, on the inevitable stroke of death which may fur-

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prize him, unprepared, and hurry him unto judgment with all his sins on his head; on the rigorous examination he is to undergo, on the impartial sentence to be pronounced; a sentence which is to determine his fate to all eternity: would he not be more exact and circumspect as to the means he employs to advance himself; would he not be engaged to work out his salvation in fear and trembling, and to act on all occasions with that degree of caution and vigilance, which becomes a mortal and accountable creature.

Perhaps he will say, that he is sufficiently acquainted with all these truths, I will then ask him. What avails a barren speculative knowledge, which lies dormant in his breast, and has no vital influence on his conduct? Is it not necessary, that he be reminded of his duty and induced to practice it? The more he knows, the stricter is the account to be demanded of him. For, the servant who knows his master's will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. Every one will allow, that the poor and the ignorant, who form the mass and bulk of mankind, and in need of religious instruction. Debarred from the advantages of education, doomed from their earliest youth to earn their subsistence by the sweat of their brow; what would their situation be, had they not the houses of the living God to resort to for their improvement in Christian morality, comfort in their afflictions, relief in their difficulties, ease from their hardships, and advancement in the ways of salvation? I have known some, who were plunged in the deepest distress, and on the brink of despair, to return home from the house of God, filled with consolation, and perfectly renewed to the adorable dispensations of Providence. What would become of society, if the lower classes were set free from religious restraints; if the torrent of anarchy were allowed to break down the barriers

barriers of subordination and dependance? If it is necessary, that the master should learn how to command in the spirit of Christian meekness, is it not equally necessary that the servant should learn how to obey, not as an eye servant, but as one who looks up to his God, and cheerfully acquits himself of the obligations, annexed to his dependant situation in life, with a view of pleasing him, who is the sovereign Lord and Master of us all? We frequently hear masters and mistresses complain of the dishonesty and disorderly lives of their servants, but are they not often accessory to the evils they complain of? Not satisfied to infect their servants by the contagious example of their own neglect and indifference, they do not allow them time to comply with their religious duties, or to hear religious instructions. I have observed, that when a short exhortation is to be delivered, servants are the first to turn their backs, hurried away from the house of God by the whimsical, imperious and irreligious commands of those, who ought to know that the service of the King of kings especially on the days which he has consecrated to his service, to be preferred before their own. And what is the consequence? The servants immersed in the gross and ignorant do not know how to think, speak or act like Christians. Let our station in the world be high or low, a moment's reflection will convince us all, how much it is our interest to have serious meditations suggested, good dispositions raised, strong and lively impressions of duty made on our minds, which may settle into a fixed determination, never to lose sight of our everlasting interests, but to make the salvation of our souls the grand and only affair, the primary object of our views and aims. Some, though not guilty of flagrant transgressions, indulge themselves in a state of languor and tepidity absolutely incompatible with the fervour of charity. Is it not necessary

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that the word of God should point out to them the danger they are in, and remind them how easy it is to fall from repeated habits of lesser offences to fall into more grievous ones, which kindle the divine wrath, and extinguish grace, give death to the soul and open the infernal abyss? Even the righteous, whose constant study it is to advance every day in the ways of perfection, feel the necessity of guarding their hearts against the subtle insinuations of self-love, the corruption of the world, the loose and impious maxims, so artfully and industriously disseminated by profligate unprincipled men, who are nominal Christians, and real infidels. Convinced that the word of God will fortify them against all attacks, and be their best and surest defence, they hear with docility and respect, digest it by frequent meditation, and convert it into sound and wholesome nourishment. By making a personal application to themselves of the pure and sublime truths of Christian morality, they learn to correct their failings and imperfections, they are more and more enamoured with the beauty of virtue and holiness, animated by the glorious prospect of the rewards held out to the faithful followers of Jesus Christ, they persevere to the end, and gain the prize. My delight, O my God, is to make the good grain produce an hundred fold, in a soil so well prepared to receive it. Such are the solid and substantial advantages we ought to reap from hearing the word of God. But how is this to be done? In what spirit and with what dispositions ought we to hear it? This shall be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

To hear the word of God is an act of religion, which requires a suitable preparation of heart and mind. Shutting out the thoughts of the world, and intent on our spiritual improvement: we should

should have no other object in view, but to learn the will of our divine Master, and faithfully practice it. It is my God, who is to speak to me. Surely this single consideration should command the powers and faculties of our souls, captivate our senses and imaginations, make us steady and collected; and impress us with lively sentiments of gratitude to the eternal Wisdom, who vouchsafes to be our Teacher. How many millions of human beings are deprived of the advantages you enjoy. They are seated in darkness and in the shadow of death, the light of the Gospel has never shone upon them, the dew of heaven has never fallen on the parched soil of their uncultivated souls. Now I ask you what superior merit did the common Father of all mankind discover in you that could entitle you to so signal a mark of predilection? Without pretending to fathom the mysterious and unsearchable ways of his Providence, let us bless, praise and adore his transcendent goodness in communicating to us the knowledge of those saving truths, the direct tendency of which is, to promote our temporal and everlasting happiness. Behold, the most affectionate of Fathers advises me to reform my life, to return to him: he holds out his arms to receive me; and shall I not listen to him with docility and respect; throw myself at his feet, and embrace the offers of his mercy. The source of all wisdom dispels my doubts, enlightens my mind, and points out to me the way that leads to heaven. And shall I refuse to be directed by an infallible guide, who cannot lead me astray, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. The King of kings commands me, and shall I, who am but dust and ashes, refuse to obey. O had you a proper sense of the value of the gift imparted to you, you would improve it to the best advantage, you would cherish the seeds of immortality, which the preachers of God's word, who are his organs,

ambassadors

ambassadors and representatives, endeavour to implant in your breasts. It would be your delight to indulge the devout affections which the word of God, if properly heard, would not fail to excite. But alas, how often do you hear it with disgust, with a fastidious delicacy, with a spirit of criticism, which prompts you to display your wit in making remarks on the preacher's sentiments, language, accent and delivery? How often do you hear it, as the word of man and not of God. Can you imagine that your conversion and sanctification depend on the feeble voice of man. No; in this case there is no proportion between the cause and the effect. The voice of man is but an empty sound without body or substance, but the voice of God is all-powerful: it is like unto a two-edged word. Attend to your God, and with meekness receive the ungrafted word which is able to save our souls. By hearing it as the word of man, you dishonour it, you degrade it, you over-rate it, you effectually check its divine energy, and offer the highest insult to God himself. St. Paul preached to the people of Lycaonia; enraptured at his discourse, and delighted with his words, they followed him in crowds, offer him incense, and are ready to acknowledge and worship him as the god of eloquence. But not one of all these admirers is converted, not one of them renounces his errors to embrace the faith. The reason is obvious: They considered him merely as a man of eloquence, not an Apostle commissioned by heaven to reclaim them from idolatry, and save their souls. You must not then confine your attention to the person of the preacher, who may have his weaknesses and imperfections, but look up to the glorious character with which he is invested, and then you will view him in a proper light, as the interpreter and ambassador of his divine Master, who commands you to hear him, as you would hear himself. Yes, he

he that heareth you heareth me, he that despiseth you despiseth me. Another abuse of the divine word is to make it a vehicle of scandal, by maliciously applying it to the faults of others, and not to our own. When the reigning vices and disorders of the world are painted in their native deformity, to excite your abhorrence and detestation of them, you indulge the malignity of your heart in personal reflections, in passing sentence on your neighbour, whose picture you imagine is drawn to the life, when perhaps, if you did yourself justice, and sounded your heart, you would find that the picture was drawn for yourself. Blinded by self-love, you do not see your pride and corruption because you do not wish to see them; you employ the aid of frivolous pretexts, and false reasonings to gloss over, and even justify your iniquities; but you are clearighted to the failings of your neighbour which you blacken and aggravate into heinous offences, and you lay hold on the word of God, to support you in your rash and uncharitable judgments. You hear it then not to reclaim yourself for in your own eyes you are perfectly innocent and irreproachable; but to be the censor of others, you come like the haughty Pharisee to make an ostentatious display of your own merits, and condemn the humble Publican: you return home condemned by your God for having sacrilegiously abused the word of life, and changed it into a principle of death and perdition. How is this to be accounted for? There are characters susceptible of every impression, some are feeble and inconstant: they feel lively emotions, wishes and desires of amendment, but they want steadiness and vigour to carry their good purposes into execution. Like those fair blossoms, which are blasted by an unfavourable wind, their prospect of conversion is blasted by the storm of temptation: lavish of their promises, they fail in the performance. While their passions lie

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dormant in their breasts, good resolutions cost them nothing, but when their passions are awakened and kindled into a flame, their resolutions, overpowered by the violence of their passions, fall to the ground. If you mean to avoid so great an evil, cherish the salutary impressions you receive, dwell on them till they penetrate your very souls and take deep root. Let the truths you hear be the subject of your frequent and serious meditations; apply them to your spiritual wants and necessities; let the fruits of them appear in the change of your lives, in the reformation of your conduct. When the sermon is over, spend not your time in idle encomiums on the preacher, in saying that he has given you a good discourse. To what purpose has he given you a good discourse, if you do not improve by it? Remember, that not the hearers of the word, but the doers shall be justified. How great will your confusion be, when you shall stand at the bar of the divine Justice, and be called to a strict account for the many sermons and exhortations you have heard, and heard in vain. You cannot plead ignorance. Your eyes have been opened to the disorders of your life, you have been solicited to repent, and return to your God: and have you done so? You knew the way in which you should walk, but you continued to walk in the broad road of perdition. Can you then expect a more favourable sentence than that pronounced on the barren land, which though often watered with the dews of heaven, yielded nothing but thorns and briars. Remember, that the Word of God is a grace held out to you by the Father of mercies; if you neglect to hear it, you might and neglect the grace that is offered you, and call down the divine judgments on your heads. If you hear it, and reap no benefit from it, you owe it to your condemnation.

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I may venture to say, that your criminal neglect of these religious obligations, gives sufficient reason to apprehend that the fun of the Gospel, which has enlightened you for so many ages, may go down from you for ever, and rise on other nations, to kindle in their hearts a holy zeal to animate them by its vital heat, and produce in them those fruits of salvation, which it has failed to produce in you. This severe judgment, which he has exercised on others, may fall on yourselves, as the just punishment of your crimes.

What then, Christians, have you to do? In the first place, let me conjure you to divest yourselves of that spirit of pride which makes you wise in your own conceit, and return to the spirit of humility and obedience, which characterized your predecessors in the faith. The terror of restrictive laws which were then in force could not damp their zeal; they came in crowds to hear the word of God, wherever it was announced to them. Let it not be said of us, that the free exercise of our holy religion has no other effect on us, but to make us more careless and indifferent in regard to its duties and observances. Christians, do not provoke the Almighty to withdraw from you the gift of faith. Surely this would be an ungrateful return to heaven for all its benefits.

Secondly, whenever you come to hear the word of God, prepare your hearts, by a spirit of prayer and recollection, to receive the divine seed. Let the truths of eternal life command that respectful attention which is due to them. Listen to the warnings of conscience, the voice of God within you, to the inspirations of his holy grace. Treasure up in your minds the maxims of heavenly wisdom with

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sincere desire, and fixed determination, invariably to adhere to them during the course of your lives. By hearing the word of God with such dispositions, you will insure to yourselves the solid and lasting advantages to be expected from it. You will find it to be the support of your weakness, the purifier of your hearts, the light of your souls, your sure and unerring guide to the mansions of everlasting bliss. Amen.

S E R M O N XXV.

ON RELIGIOUS VIRTUE.

Blessed are the clean of heart. Matt. v. 8.

HOW different are the maxims of the world from those of the Gospel! If you believe the world to be the life of the just and religious man, who is ever attentive to the law of God, and to the great concerns of eternity, is to the last degree insipid and comfortless; it is a life of perpetual restraint, it is a yoke impossible to be borne. What says the man of the world; must I give up those pleasures to which my inclinations invite me, must I be austere and unsociable, must I be an enemy to my own happiness? This, Christians, is the unfavourable light in which virtue and innocence are generally viewed. To guard you then against the prejudices and misrepresentations of a deluded world will be doing you an essential piece of service. I know that happiness either real or imaginary is the wished for object which all mankind pursue: but this the wise man and the fool, the righteous man, and the sinner are all agreed. But the difference between them lies, in determining where their happiness consists. A mistake

this point must be attended with the most dreadful consequences.

Christians, I do not know a more powerful motive, to induce you to the constant and uniform practice of religious virtue, than the consideration of your own interest. Arguments drawn from this source must be irresistible. Now, if it can be proved, that the situation of the good Christian, even in this life, is much more desirable than that of the sinner who is unmindful of God. You will then clearly see, that every advantage is on the side of religious virtue; you cannot then be so insensible to your own interest, as blindly to run after those false pleasures, which instead of bringing peace and comfort to the soul, leave nothing behind them but anguish and remorse. Thus, you will no longer be the dupes of passion, or prejudice; you will find, that your duty is essentially connected with your happiness; you will be convinced, that you must be truly virtuous, if you mean to be truly happy.

From what has been said, you may be able to form an idea of the subject which I shall offer to your consideration in the following discourse. I shall reduce it within a narrow compass, by observing to you, that religious virtue lightens our sufferings, and redoubles our joys. That it lightens our sufferings will be the subject of the first part. And redoubles our joys, will be the subject of the second.

O my God, thou art our first beginning and our last end; thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless, till they repose in thee. May we never seek for happiness out of thee. May we never seek for it in the poisoned streams of worldly pleasure; may we never forsake thee, Fountain of living waters. O Jesus, who has taught us the maxims of Christian perfection, grant us grace to observe them; raise our hearts above

above all that is earthly, and unite them to thee. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, whose happy soul found in thee her comfort, her treasure, her life, her love and her all. We salute her in the words of the Angel. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

That virtue is the source of true happiness, that what is commonly called evil, could not disturb the peace of the wise man, were the favourite maxims of the heathen philosophers. In the midst of the darkness which surrounded them, they discovered the necessity of keeping the passions in subjection, in order to attain to that calmness and composure of mind which they vainly promised to their followers. Accordingly, they bestowed the highest encomiums on that firm independent spirit, which raises man above the contingencies of life; on that greatness of soul which shews itself in the contempt of all earthly goods. All the charms of eloquence were employed in setting off these pompous and striking lessons. But the misfortune was, that they dazzled the mind, and did not enlighten it; they were lost in air, and did not reach the heart; they could not disengage it from its false attachments; they could not give that command over the passions, which they pretended to ensure. But thanks for ever to Jesus Christ, our divine legislator, who enlightens the minds and touches the hearts of his followers. What the ideal beauty of virtue could never do, he has done. He shews us, where our happiness lies; he animates us in the pursuit of it; he gives us grace to attain it. In his school were formed men, who realized and reduced to practice

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what was before the matter of empty parade, and idle speculation. Men who were truly great, and rich by their contempt of all worldly honours and riches; men, who sat down content in the shade of poverty and obscurity; men, who were patient and resigned in the midst of sufferings; men who were happy in every station of life, for their hopes were big with immortality, and their souls were centered in their God the fountain of all happiness. Such are the resources, which the good Christian finds in the constant practice of religious virtue. The testimony of a good conscience, and the glorious prospects which his faith holds out to him, support him under those trials which overwhelm others.

But in the hour of distress, where is the comfort of that unhappy man, who is condemned to endure the pangs of guilt, and the vexations of calamity? Perhaps in the days of his prosperity, he eluded in some measure the force of conscience, carried round in a circle of pleasures and amusements, he endeavoured to forget himself, and to face the impressions of the law written on his heart. At other times, he took care to drown the voice of conscience in the noise and bustle of an active and worldly life. He knew, that on reflection he would be forced to condemn himself, and therefore he allowed himself no time for any serious thought. He sought for relief in a drunkenness of mind, in a temporary extinction of reason, as if reason were a curse and not a blessing. But on a reverse of fortune, when he has no longer the means of gratifying his passions, when all earthly comforts fail him, when he is considered as a mere nothing in the world, and left to himself, then conscience will vindicate her right; then a crowd of melancholy thoughts will rush in upon him; when the recollection of the past must be dreadful indeed.

indeed. What does he see? He sees a life worn out in the service of iniquity; he sees his crimes rising before him in their native deformity; he sees himself, and this is enough to torment and distract him. A sense of guilt mixes itself with all he suffers, his afflictions appear to him the messengers of the wrath of heaven, and he thinks, that he beholds the hand of God openly stretched out against him. How painful is it to him, to see others enjoying what he once enjoyed, rising on his ruins, and triumphing at his disgrace? He had set his heart on riches, and they are flown from him; he had been a slave to the world, and the world has abandoned him; he feels, in the bitterness of his soul, that half the pains he had taken for the world would be enough to ensure his salvation. He had courted the esteem and applause of men, and he meets with nothing but contempt and disgrace. Prostrate, and forlorn, he is left on the ground to brood over his misfortunes in a pensive mood, without a ray of hope or comfort. Who can paint the distracted state of his guilty soul? Let us now from this melancholy scene turn our eyes to a brighter prospect, I mean that of the good Christian, contending with the storms of adversity. To the changes and vicissitudes of life he is liable as well as others. But he is fortified against the attack. He well knew the vanity and inconstancy of the world, and therefore he was prepared for the worst. He has not the additional load of guilt to depress his spirits. He has endeavoured to secure to himself the friendship of that Almighty Being, who will never forsake those, who place their confidence in him. It is true; crosses and disappointments may ruffle the surface of his mind, but there is a strength within, which resists their farther impression. He has never set his heart on the riches and honours of the world, and therefore he

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can part them without regret. To please God was his study and delight; he despised the world and its censures. The divine grace is all sufficient to support him; he finds, that the yoke of Christ is sweet, and his burden light; that God is with him in the midst of tribulation to encourage and assist him. When he takes a view of the sufferings of his Redeemer, he cheerfully embraces his own, he is happy in carrying his cross and following Jesus Christ. Besides, he has many failings and imperfections to atone for, and he considers it an act of mercy in the Almighty, to give him the means of expiating them at an easy rate. Thus, his soul is perfectly serene and composed; in whatever may befall him, he adores the will of heaven; he sees an allwise Providence directing every event towards the happiness of the righteous: he pours out his soul before his heavenly Father, and looks up to him with that filial confidence which religion inspires. In him he finds a true friend in the time of need, a friend who will never disappoint him. Such Christians, are the privileges of religious virtue; such the comforts it affords. How long shall we be strangers to its happy influence? How long shall we continue to act in direct opposition to the first principles of reason? We know, where our happiness is, and we fly from it; we feel our misery, and we are in love with it. How comes it, O my God, that man whom thou hast formed to thy own image and likeness is such an enemy to himself! How good thou art in not suffering us to be happy without thee! in attracting us to thy service by the prevailing motive of our own interest, by the great and glorious rewards thou hast prepared for us.

The good Christian has heaven in view; where his treasure is, there he dwells in hope and desire; he raises his thoughts above this land of exile,

exile, this vale of tears, to his true country, where sorrow or sadness shall not be known, where there shall be fullness of joy for ever more, where eternity shall be the measure of his happiness. Blessed hope, how justly art thou styled the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. Distracted by the confusions of this fluctuating life, in thee we find both peace and rest. It is true, the hope of the righteous man does not amount to a certainty; he may fall from the state of grace; he knows not, whether he shall persevere to the end; his salvation is in the hands of God. This consideration banishes a false security, but not a salutary confidence. He knows, that the Almighty will make good his promises in favour of those who love him, that he who sent his only Son on earth to redeem all mankind, wills in a special manner the salvation of the righteous. He knows, that grace gives him a title to the crown; he endeavours to maintain his title by a constant fidelity. He is only a passenger through this world, and will he not submit to some slight inconveniences on his way to his heavenly country? What are the tribulations of a moment, if compared to the eternal weight of glory reserved for him? In the twinkling of an eye, the time of trial will be no more; an endless and undisturbed enjoyment is to follow.

Christians, are not such reflections capable of alleviating the distresses of life, and of cheering the virtuous sufferer? Yes; in the arms of death they will furnish a cordial to his drooping spirits. In this awful moment the world with all its pomps and vanities, with all its false appearances of happiness, with all its phantoms and shadows disappears from before him. How happy is he now in having despised it; in having disengaged his affections from all earthly objects

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and embraced crosses, mortifications, and self-denials so little known to the worldlings, but so dear to the faithful servants of God. While he sustains the painful conflict, the Father of mercies pours into his soul the balm of heavenly consolation. For, his faith enlivens his hope, his hope inflames his love, and his love springs forward towards his God, the center of his happiness, and the end of all his labours. Thus, he triumphs in the very agony of death: now the moment of his glory is at hand, the bands of his mortality are to be broken, his earthly tabernacle is to fall, his immortal soul is to take her flight to the world of spirits, and sweetly to repose in the Lord. Now all her hopes are happily lost in possession; now she begins to taste those pure joys, which the eye has not seen, nor the mind of man ever conceived. Such, Christians, is the happiness of a soul that delights in religious virtue, who loves her God, and consecrates to him every moment of her mortal life; such are the glorious prospects, which her faith holds out to her. On the other hand the faith of the sinner is his punishment; nay, if I may use the expression, it is his hell upon earth. What does it announce to him but the wrath of heaven. It is an avenging light, which pursues and disturbs him; it forces him to see what he would wish to lose sight of, to know what he would not wish to know, it carries into his soul those terrors which conscious guilt and the apprehension of endless torments can raise in a heated imagination. And when he approaches to that boundary, which separates this world from the next; must he not shudder at the dark prospect before him? How forcibly must these terrors operate on him, when the pangs of a painful temper rack his body, and rend his very soul, when death knocks, at his door, and tells him,
that

that he must shortly appear before the sovereign Judge. Oh, would he not give ten thousand worlds, to have some comfort and support in this hour of unutterable anguish! But alas! there is no comfort for him. He who rashly presumed on the divine mercy, who imagined, that in an instant, he could work out his salvation, is now tempted to despair. Oh, says he within himself, had I served my God faithfully, while I was in my health, while I was able to serve him, I might have some prospect of a happy change; but now that the cold hand of death is on me, that the power of sinning has left me, what merit can there be in any thing I can do. I know, Christians, that this despair is unreasonable and highly criminal: for while there is life, there are hopes, and whenever the most grievous sinner turns to the Lord with his whole heart, the arms of the divine mercy are stretched wide to receive him. All I meant, was to lay before you the ordinary consequences of a sinful life, and to prove to you, that a sense of guilt highly aggravates the calamities to which we are liable in this vale of tears, and is to the last degree painful and distressing in that awful moment, which is to close our mortal existence. On the other hand, you have observed, that a sense of religious virtue dissipates the clouds of adversity, and brightens the dark prospect of death. Now, I appeal to your reason and to your feelings, if the good Christian be not infinitely happier than the sinner, in either of these trying situations. You must then wilfully shut your eyes against the light of reason, if you do not endeavour to qualify yourselves for receiving those comforts which flow from religious virtue and yield in abundance. I believe you are convinced, that it lightens our sufferings, and also redoubles our joys: This will be the subject of

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THE SECOND PART.

From the influence of religious virtue on the mind of man in adversity, I now come to consider what influence it may have upon him in his more flourishing state, and how far it may contribute to the enjoyment of prosperity. We shall find, that the virtuous man, surrounded with temporal blessings, is much happier than the sinner in the same situation. To convince you of a truth so honourable to virtue, I shall view the good Christian in three different relations: first, with regard to himself, second, with regard to his God, third, with regard to his fellow creatures. His inward peace and tranquillity of mind, his gratitude and piety to God, and that spirit of charity, which ever prompts him to do good to his fellow-creatures, give him a decided superiority over the riotous and disorderly sinner. You all know, that the mind is the seat of happiness. External advantages alone can never ensure it. No; give a man all the riches and honours that the world can bestow, if his heart be oppressed with grief or devoured by care, he cannot be truly happy. In vain then, does the sinner diversify his pleasures; he carries with him the load of a guilty conscience, the uneasiness of the distracted state of his mind is enough, to embitter them all. In vain does passion tell him, that there can be no harm in gratifying those inclinations which nature has planted in his breast; he would wish it were so, but he cannot be convinced of it; his own mind tells him the contrary. For, an incorruptible judge passes sentence on him, whenever he dares to overleap the bounds which religious virtue prescribes, whenever the madness and intoxication of prosperity hurry him into criminal excesses. In vain does he say to himself, when he

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is swallowing large draughts of worldly pleasure. It is good to be here, a moment of reflection dissipates the illusion, and pierces his heart with sorrow. In vain does he plunge into an abyss of iniquity, and endeavour to extinguish the divine light which is in him, the worm of conscience still fastens to him, and preys upon his spirits. In a word, whatever pains he may take to stupify himself into a false security, he cannot succeed. There is no peace to the wicked, says the Lord, and accordingly, he has none. Is he then an object of envy, who in the midst of his boasted enjoyments cannot enjoy himself.

How different is the situation of the virtuous and religious man ! He truly enjoys his prosperous condition ; his best riches lie within ; his mind is a well governed kingdom, where he keeps every thing in peace and order, his appetites are subject to reason, and his reason to God ; his pleasures are pure, temperate, and rational ; the happiness he pursues is worthy of an immortal soul, which no created object can fully satisfy. No guilty terrors damp his joys ; he is not afraid to look into himself, he does not decline an impartial review of his past conduct ; a good conscience is to him a continual feast, from which a source of interior delight flows ; that habitual cheerfulness of temper, which the gay unthinking part of the world strive to imitate, but cannot attain. The more he advances in the ways of perfection, the happier he must be ; a holy joy takes possession of his heart, he feels some sparks of that divine fire with which the saints abound in heaven. Thus, he consecrates his prosperity to God, and draws down a blessing on all he possesses. Thus, his prosperity is redoubled to him by the dispositions of his soul, which enable him to enjoy it. He is in peace with himself, and therefore he truly lives : for to him who lives without it, life must be a burthen. In

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word, Christians, turn yourselves which way you will, you never find any pleasure on earth that deserves to be compared to that joy, which springs up in the mind from the consciousness of a virtuous and religious life, to that glow of devotion, which warms the breast of the true Christian, when he feels, that all the powers and inclinations of his soul strongly impel him to the possession of the sovereign good. For, the good Christian never loses sight of his God. To him he is united by grace, and charity cements the holy union. How happy is he in pleasing his God, a God infinitely amiable in himself and infinitely good to him. The will of his heavenly Father is the unerring rule of his conduct; his duty and his inclination go hand in hand. If any difficulties should come in the way, love smooths them all: he feels, how sweet it is to love his God, and that nothing is difficult to him who truly loves. Animated by the prospect of never ending bliss, he defies the world to separate him from his God. In the observance of his religious duties, he acquires new strength, new vigour to raise his spirits, and enable him cheerfully to run the race of immortality. In that life-giving food, which the Saviour of the world, in the excess of his love and mercy, has prepared for him, he finds all that his heart can wish for here below. It is the heavenly manna which refreshes him in his earthly pilgrimage; it is the support and nourishment of his soul; it is a pledge even to his mortal body of a glorious immortality. Can he refuse giving his heart to that God, who gives him nothing less than himself? With a lively sense of gratitude, he looks up to his great Benefactor, who has crowned him with blessings, and raised him to a distinguished rank in life. He ascribes all his success to the divine favour, and not to his own exertions. He rises above the happiness which surrounds him
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to contemplate the Creator of heaven and earth the giver of all good gifts: in the beauties of nature, in the heavenly bodies which roll over his head with so much order and regularity, in the variety of living creatures which minister to his use and convenience, in the admirable structure of his own body, in the faculties of his immortal soul, he sees the works of an all bountiful hand. But how must his gratitude be inflamed, when he considers, that the living God loved him so much as to shed for him the last drop of his precious blood. Here he is lost in the immensity of divine love! Here he feels those transports of devotion which words can but faintly impart. To meditate on the law of God is his study and delight. This holy exercise preserves him from the contagion of the world, from the corruption of the flesh. He knows, that the figure of this world passes away, that his God abides for ever, to serve him then must be his true interest, it must make him happy both here and hereafter. But when his faith lays open to his view the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem, how does his heart exult in the pleasing hope, that he shall see and enjoy his God for ever and ever. With a noble indifference he looks down on all created objects, on all worldly greatness. He earnestly wishes for the happy moment, when he is to be called away from the society of sinners to join the assembly of the holy and the just, who have finished their course, and gained the prize.

Christians, do not such reflections give him a foretaste of that inconceivable bliss, the full enjoyment of which is reserved for him in a future state. While he remains in this state of trial and probation, he manifests his love for his God, by loving his fellow creatures. He shares his riches with those, from whom providence has withheld them; his life is spent in those acts of mercy and charity

charity, which heaven itself surveys with pleasure; his days are filled with good works, he feels himself happy in contributing to the happiness of all around him. He cheers the sorrowful abodes of poverty and distress; he administers relief and comfort to the bed of sickness; he dries up the tears of the widow and orphan; he is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; he scatters blessings wherever he passes.

Christians, what a source of enjoyment is here opened to a generous mind, what pleasure must be found in the Godlike exercise of doing good? Consult your own hearts, and they will tell you, how pure how sublime this pleasure is, how worthy a Christian soul. But this is not all, what his reason and his feelings approve, religion ennobles and sanctifies. He knows, that the Almighty is the great and universal proprietor, to whom he is bound to pay homage for what he possesses, to pay out of his worldly substance a tribute of gratitude for the temporal blessings conferred on him. But to whom is this tribute to be paid? not immediately and directly to the Almighty, who does not stand in need of it; but to the poor, on whom he has a right, whom he has appointed to receive the sacred gifts which are due to him, and offer them up to heaven. He knows, that his Lord and Saviour has substituted the poor in his stead, that he is pleased to consider what is done to them, as done to himself, that not even a cup of cold water given in his name shall pass unrewarded? What comfort then is it to him to reflect, that he has engaged so many powerful intercessors for his behalf, who are daily lifting up their hands to heaven for him, and blessing the God that gave him birth? His faith tells him, that it must be his interest, to send before him a part of his perishable riches to that place, where the rust doth not consume, nor

the moth devour, where they shall produce a hundred fold; where never failing treasures shall be the portion of those, who have in the spirit of Christian charity relieved the distressed members and representatives of Jesus Christ. Thus, he sanctifies his prosperity by the good use he makes of it, and that state, which others abuse to their eternal ruin, becomes to him a source of merit, and of everlasting happiness.

Christians, I have exhibited to your view, a just and faithful picture of the virtuous and religious man in prosperity; you have already observed with what dignity he supports himself in the hour of distress. Now let me ask you, whatever your situation in life may be, would you not wish to resemble him? If the clouds of adversity should gather over your heads, would you not wish to be prepared for the storm and to rest on that firm support which religious virtue yields. If prosperity should smile upon you, would you not wish to enjoy it as Christians, and make it an introduction to more lasting enjoyments? No doubt, you would, why then do you not take a decided part on a question, which so materially concerns you, which takes in both your present and future happiness. Give up the base and shortlived pleasures of sin, for the refined and Godlike entertainments of religious virtue. Establish once for all a solid peace in your hearts, cleanse them from iniquity, and you will remove the cause of all your uneasiness. For the consciousness of having regained the divine favour, will afford you a satisfaction infinitely superior to those false joys, which blind the understanding, corrupt the heart, and leave a deadly sting behind them.

Open our eyes, O my God, to our true interest. Give us a relish for those pure pleasures which flow from a Christian life, a life devoted to thy holy service. May thy all-powerful grace triumph over

all the dangers and difficulties which surround us. Guard us against the maxims of the world, the torrent of bad example, the impressions made on our senses, and the wiles of the infernal spirits. May we never be lead astray from the paths of peace and innocence. May we praise and glorify thy holy name, in all the occurrences of this changeable life. In the midst of afflictions may we look up to thee as our comforter; surrounded with thy blessings, may our hearts overflow with gratitude to thee, the author of them all. Thus, we shall be happy here below, and our present happiness will be a prelude to those everlasting joys, the great and glorious reward of those who love thee, Fountain of all happiness. Amen.

S E R M O N XXVI.

ON CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

I am the light of the world. John viii. 12.

WHAT man ever before appeared on earth invested with so glorious and extraordinary a character! I am the Light of the world, the Teacher of mankind, the only Guide to lead them into the paths of truth. I unfold to them the Oracles of eternal wisdom; I discover to the little ones, who believe in me, what was unknown to the great and to the wise ones of the world, what human wisdom, left to itself, could never find out: I bring life and immortality to light; he that follows me walketh not in darkness. Christians, we enjoy the inestimable advantages of being called to the faith of Jesus Christ; we are therefore indispensably bound to look up to him as our Guide, our Model, and our Legislator; to hear with profound respect the truths that fall from his sacred lips, and make them the rule of our conduct. To act otherwise, would be to forfeit the blessings to which we are entitled as Christians. How comes it then to pass, that in this *enlightened age* maxims are received, which stand in direct opposition to the maxims

of the Gospel? How many give out with an air of confidence, that moral honesty is the only thing to be attended to, that it is the part of a great and generous mind to soar above vulgar prejudices, and not to be attached to any outward forms of religious worship. They are men of the world; they set up for a nice sense of honour and honesty, they are, if you believe themselves, the only men to be depended on. As to religious duties, they treat them with contempt, and leave them to weak and superstitious minds. Can a greater insult be offered to the Saviour of the world, than to say, that his labours, sufferings, and death are all to no purpose? This is the consequence which immediately follows from the boasted principle of moral honesty. For what is morality without religion, but a shadow without a substance: such a system of morality would become heathens and not Christians: nothing but a wrong notion of religion could give it birth. Does not Christianity enforce every moral obligation? Does it not propose to us the strongest motives that can possibly influence the human heart? In vain do we adore God, if we adore him not in spirit and in truth; in vain do we pay him outward homage, if our actions belie our professions; in vain do we call ourselves Christians, if we be Christians by name only and not by reality; in vain do we honour him with our lips, if our hearts be far from him, if we be not faithful in the discharge of our respective duties. And when I speak of duties, I mean the ordinary duties of life, the duties we owe to each other as members of society. Thus, religion strengthens and supports morality. Take away religion, and morality, resting on no solid foundation, must fall to the ground. If any one should tell me, that reason alone will enable a man to acquit himself properly of his moral and social obligations, I will answer him, that what reason has not been able to do

do for so many ages, it cannot do now; that its light is easily extinguished by our passions, by the corruptions of our hearts, by the false splendours of the world, which catch our eye and seduce our affections; that the many errors and absurdities into which unassisted reason has fallen in respect to the most essential points of morality, prove to demonstration, that its faint and glimmering light is not much to be depended on. It was therefore necessary that Jesus Christ, the eternal Wisdom should come on earth to recall man from his wanderings, and enlighten his mind with the saving knowledge of the Gospel.

From what has been said, Christians, you may conclude, that religion and morality are two things which God has essentially connected: their union forms the respectable character of the true Christian. Let us endeavour, as far as human weakness will allow, to follow the standard of all perfection. I shall therefore proceed, with the divine assistance, to lay before you in the following discourse, the insufficiency of the one without the other, and to prove to you, that a man without religion cannot have true moral honesty, that without a fund of moral honesty he cannot have true religion. In a word, there is no true moral honesty without religion. To prove which, will be the subject of the first part: no true religion without moral honesty, will be the subject of the second part.

O Jesus, thou hast the words of eternal life, we know no other teacher but thee, and those whom thou hast appointed to watch over our souls. Give us that spirit of docility and submission, which marks thy true disciples. May thy holy religion, the daughter of heaven, engage our affections, regulate our conduct, and lead us to thee. Guard our hearts against the corrupt maxims of the world. May our lives be edifying; may they be striking

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lessons of every virtue. May our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify thee, who art in heaven. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of thy blessed mother, whom thou hast enriched with such a profusion of graces and blessings, as qualified her for that eminent degree of glory, to which she is raised. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

The wisest legislators among the heathens insisted on the necessity of religious worship; they found a sense of a supreme Being implanted in the human breast: this they considered as a necessary sanction to the laws, as the firm support of civil government. Now if religion, even in its worst state, when clouded with so many errors and superstitions, contributed to promote the welfare of society, how much more so must the religion of Jesus Christ, that law of love, which teaches us to look upon the meanest of our fellow-creatures as our brother? After the glorious discoveries which divine revelation has made to us, is it not strange that men should be found so ungrateful, so rebellious to the heavenly light, as to undervalue the blessings held out to them, and study to deprive the world of those additional restraints from vice, those additional motives to virtue, which the Gospel dispensation provides. It is true, if all men were born with virtuous dispositions, we might in some measure depend on their moral honesty. The native charms of virtue would be powerful enough to conciliate our affections, and attract us to her service, if the clouds raised by our passions did not obscure the the lustre of her beauty. But alas, we experience a constant and violent opposition between our duty and inclination. At first, sensual and worldly pleasures offer themselves to the credulous

dulous and unsuspecting youth, who vainly fancies, that real happiness is to be found in them. Virtue then appears to him in a frightful and disgusting shape, a subtle poison insinuates itself into all the faculties of his soul, and taints the purity of his mind. As he advances, the cares and solitudes of life press hard upon him, and tempt him to overleap the bounds, which moral honesty prescribes. Besides, his natural weakness and inconstancy exposes him to many dangers. He soon grows tired of the painful efforts, which a steady attention to duty and virtue requires. Now, what can bear him up in the midst of so many temptations, what can give him security, when he is beset with so many dangers? Nothing, Christians, nothing, but religion can support him in the conflict, and crown him with victory. The reason is obvious, the motives that religion proposes are constant and invariable, no change, in their respective circumstances or situations, can effect them; they are capable of overawing the sinner, and checking him in the career of vice and disorder, and thus terrify him more, than the idea of an invisible Judge, who sounds his heart, pries into its inmost recesses, sees his most secret thoughts, and has prepared everlasting torments for the wicked. Such considerations, if duly attended to, would make a powerful impression on the mind, no temptation could withstand their force; the sinner would immediately fly from the terrors of God's justice, and throw himself into the arms of his mercy. He knows, that though his crimes may escape public notice, they cannot escape that all-piercing eye, which never sleeps nor slumbers. If, therefore, he means to commit sin with any degree of ease or satisfaction to himself; he must shut his eyes against the wrath of heaven, against the avenging flames kindled by the hand of an angry God. I know, that there are some Christians

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on whose practice religious motives seem to have no great influence. This is a proof, that their hearts are strangely perverted, that they are so blinded and intoxicated by their passions, as not to wish to see the light. But it is no argument against the natural tendency of such motives, against that degree of weight, which they ought to have with every impartial mind. Notwithstanding the general corruption of the age, we may thank heaven, that there are yet Christians to be found, whose conduct is regulated by them.

But let me suppose for a moment, that these salutary impressions were to be effaced from the minds of men, that a state of future rewards and punishments were to be rejected, as a mere fanciful notion, unsupported by arguments either from reason or revelation, who can conceive what a scene of disorder and confusion would follow? To what lengths would unrestrained licentiousness hurry men, destitute of all religious principles? The voluptuary would give himself up without reserve to his brutal pleasures; the daring atheist, believing death an eternal sleep, would without regret, without remorse, and without fear of punishment hereafter, commit the most heinous crimes. Give me the man, who has a true sense of religion, who is animated by the prospect of a glorious immortality. His moral honesty is built on a solid foundation, which the revolutions of the world cannot shake. The motives on which he acts are independent of all human contingencies, whether the shades of obscurity conceal him from the eyes of men, or the painful preeminence of a public station exposes him to their view, he walks in the presence of his God, who is to be his judge; his conduct is steady and uniform. An unjust world may persecute him, envy may let fly her poisoned darts against him; he may suffer in his

his fortune, and even in his reputation; but his virtue never changes; for his happiness does not depend on the voice of sinners, it depends on the approbation of his God, who sees him in every situation of life, and will infallibly reward him. Was it not the prospect of future glory that supported the just of the old law, in the severe trials they had to encounter? What else could have inspired Moses with that heroic resolution, that invincible patience, which enabled him to conduct a headstrong people, who were ready to put him to death as an impostor? He was better pleased to be afflicted with the people of God, than to enjoy a temporary happiness among the Egyptians. The patience of Job is become proverbial. You all know, what a torrent of calamities burst over his head: his fidelity to God remains unshaken, his soul is filled with comfort and joy; he triumphs over all his misfortunes. How is this to be accounted for? Let us hear it from himself: I know, says this holy man, that my Redeemer liveth, that in my flesh I shall behold God my Saviour. The chaste Susannah is solicited by the judges of Israel to consent to their criminal desires; she is threatened with instant death in case of a refusal, but the loss of her life is nothing in her eyes when compared with the loss of her virtue. She is better pleased to fall a victim to the injustice of men, and preserve her innocence, than to commit sin in the face of heaven, and fall into the hands of the living God, the avenger of iniquity.

Such, Christians, are the triumphs of religion in the most critical situations it comes in to our aid; it conducts us safe through the midst of dangers, it is our surest defence in the hour of temptation. Now, what can mere reason, or a sense of moral honesty do, in such trying emergencies? They coolly propose to us our duty at a time, when our hearts are agitated by violent emotions, when

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we are in danger of falling every moment, if an almighty hand does not lift us up, and enable us to repel the fiery darts of the enemy of our souls.

I believe you are convinced of the necessity of religion in such cases, as I have laid before you : any other principles, you may be pleased to substitute in its stead, will prove but feeble barriers against the strength of passion. But perhaps you would wish to know, how far religion may be necessary in the ordinary course of all social duties. In order to satisfy you on this head, I shall examine, what the idea of religion implies. By religion we are united and subject to God, as the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth : our duty to him comprizes all our other duties and obligations. In him they all meet like so many rays of a circle which meet in the centre. When, therefore, religion commands us to adore and serve God, this commandment, far from excluding the duties of justice and charity which we owe to each other, includes them all : and instead of weakening, strengthens them ; instead of infringing on the lawful rights which others may have over us, it maintains and supports them in their full force, in their whole extent. For, the law by which I am bound to serve God, obliges me by a necessary consequence to give to every one what is due to him, tribute to whom tribute is due, honour to whom honour. The true Christian, then, must be obedient and respectful to his superiors, friendly and obliging to his equals, strictly just and punctual in his dealings, and charitable to the poor. To these duties he adheres from conscientious motives, because he knows, that God requires them at his hands. If religion enjoins fasting and abstinence, she employs them as means to facilitate the discharge of the great obligations of Christian morality, to remove the obstacles, which ungoverned

vernal passions raise against the performance of those duties, which are essential to our own happiness, and to the general welfare of society. How groundless then are the charges commonly made against religion, that she prefers arbitrary practices before the most weighty obligations, that she holds poor trembling mortals in chains at her feet, fills their hearts with vain and idle terrors, makes them timid, scrupulous and dastardly; encourages them to spend their days in a pious indolence, and inspires them with such sentiments, as would become a society of hermits who were to live out of the world, rather than a society of rational beings who were to live in it. No, Christians, religion forms us to every virtue that can be useful and ornamental to society. It is true; the religious man will act according to his conscience; but surely this is not a weakness: if the means of raising himself in the world should stand in competition with his duty to his God, he will sacrifice his present interest to preserve his integrity; and is not this a proof of his greatness of soul? He is unacquainted with the art of time serving, of giving way to circumstances, and of substituting falsehood and deceit in the place of truth and sincerity. And who is more to be depended on than a man of such a character? would you not be safer in entrusting to him any matter of consequence, than to another, who gives a plain proof of the corruption of his heart, when he glories in impiety and irreligion. Now, what can restrain men of this stamp from consulting their present interest at the expence of duty? For instance, it is in their power by what they call a happy stroke of policy, to raise on the ruins of a competitor, and at the same time preserve their reputation with the world. An opportunity offers of advancing themselves and families, if they fall in with the weakness and passions of those, who are in

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power and opulence; if they insure them success in a sinful design; if they take an unfair advantage of the credulity of their neighbour; if by art and duplicity, they can take revenge of an enemy, without apprehending any disagreeable consequences to themselves. Christians, is it not probable that on such an occasion, a mere sense of moral honesty unsupported by religion, will yield to the powerful temptation of self-interest. Is not every thing to be dreaded from that man who has lost the fear of God, who despises what the rest of mankind revere, who has shaken off the yoke of obedience due to his Creator, and broken the sacred engagements by which he was bound to serve his Lord and his God.

You see then, Christians, how little you can depend on those impious men, who exhale the poison and corruption of their hearts in blaspheming the holy religion you profess, and the God whom you adore. They may deceive weak minds by an imposing exterior; but they are strangers to solid and real virtue. For be assured, there is nothing sound, nothing steady in that heart, which is neither controlled by the fear of God, nor animated by his love. Let religion then ever claim your highest respect. Honour her in every thing, in her mysteries, in her sacraments, in her ceremonies, in her observances. As long as religion shall reign in your souls, God will be with you. If you should be so unhappy, as to fall into sin, and thereby forfeit the divine favour, religion will raise her friendly voice, recall you from your wanderings, and cheer your desponding souls by assuring you of pardon and reconciliation, if you sincerely repent. But if you extinguish this divine light, you must be like blind men, groping in the dark, unable to find out your way, and in danger, every instant, of falling into the abyss of eternal misery. O my God, what is wretched
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man when once he abandons thee: when he refuses to follow the heavenly guide thou hast appointed to conduct him; when instead of cultivating the solid and substantial virtues which religion inspires, he is satisfied to rest on the feeble support of moral honesty, which without religion must be a mere shew, an empty sound without any meaning. Thus, Christians, I have endeavoured to prove to you, that there is no true moral honesty without religion. It now remains to be proved, that there is no true religion without moral honesty.

THE SECOND PART.

There are many who impose on themselves by forming a wrong notion of religion, and spend their lives in a pleasing, but dangerous illusion. They are remarkably attentive to the outside of religion, while they neglect the interior dispositions of their hearts. They pretend to raise a superstructure of piety without laying the foundation. They value themselves on an imaginary perfection, while they fail in the most essential duties. Now, I say, that if they have not that fund of honesty, sincerity, and integrity, which constitutes a good character, even, in the eyes of the world, if they do not faithfully discharge the moral and social duties annexed to their respective situations in life, they cannot be true Christians. No; let them lull themselves as much as they can in a false security, their religion is a mere phantom, an empty name, a creature of their own and a scandal to religion. For, nothing can dishonour true religion more than such an abuse of it. And are there not many instances of this to be seen in the world? A man has his stated time for prayer, for reading good books, and approaching the sacraments. All the business in the world

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cannot prevail on him to omit one single point of what he has prescribed to himself. All this is very well: but then, the rust of avarice has eaten up in his soul the fine feelings of humanity: he is hard and oppressive to the poor; he can without emotion, see his half-famished brother in Jesus Christ, trembling and shivering at his gate; he can be deaf to his moans; he can refuse him a small pittance of that perishable dross, which he is amassing with so much care and anxiety. He can with the greatest composure, turn out the widow and the orphan into the wide world, if they pay him not his rent, even to the last farthing on the very day it falls due. All this, he says, is nothing but strict justice. Now, Christians, how little will the prayers of such a man avail him? What a poor compensation must they be for the violated law of charity? Will the merciful God look down upon him with a favourable eye, who is an enemy to his creatures? Another prays and casts a good deal, gives alms, at the same time, he is faithless in his promises, unjust in his dealings, artful and designing in business, which he would engross to himself; he is a deep schemer, ever attentive to his own interest, he strives to circumvent his neighbour, and take every advantage of him; on the slightest pretext he commences a vexatious suit, because he has the means, and expects to secure a property to himself.

Now, Christians, what do you think of such a man's religion? Are not his prayers and his offerings so many abominations in the sight of heaven? Christians, he pretends to be devout, he flatters himself to be in a state of perfect security, and effects a scrupulous regularity, a minute exactness with regard to the exterior observance of his religion. But consider what the Lord said to the Jews, who were servilely attached to outward forms, while they suffered a spirit of injustice to reign in

in their hearts: You affect a zeal for my holy law, you pretend to honour me by your sacrifices. What need have I of the blood of offered goats? Break the bonds of iniquity; extinguish in your souls the sentiments of hatred and revenge; present me with pure and innocent hearts, and then I will accept of your victims. How many imitate the Jews in an unforgiving temper, who, when they think themselves offended, will not listen to reason, will not be satisfied with any reparation that can be made? And may not the Lord say to them? Away with your confessions and communions, while your refuse to forgive, they are so many profanations which multiply your guilt. Go first be reconciled to your brother, and then you may approach the spotless Lamb, who shed his blood for the sins of the world. How odious then to the Almighty, must be those inveterate deep rooted enmities, which are sometimes even among Christians. It is true, they may add prayer to prayer, as long as they please, but their devotion vanishes like smoke, and is of no weight in the sight of God. If any one, says St. James, thinks himself to be religious not bridling his tongue but seducing his own heart, his religion is vain. We must not then indulge ourselves in the uncharitable practice of censuring and condemning others, railing at them, tearing them to pieces and arraigning the world before our tribunals. How can such a practice be agreeable to the spirit of a religion, which is holy, perfect and divine, which purifies the heart, raises its affections to God, and studies to promote the welfare of all around us.

Now, Christians, I appeal to yourselves, if the disorders, pointed out to you, be not too common in the world. What a shame it is, that they who profess Christianity and pretend to devotion can be charged with them? Men of such character

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characters would be stigmatized, even, among heathens. How then can they be entitled to the glorious appellation of Christians? For the order established by God, is, in the first place, that we be just in our dealings, faithful in our promises, disinterested in our views, and charitable to our fellow creatures: that our lives be free from reproach or blemish. Secondly, that we strengthen, and sanctify these virtues by the grand principles of religion, that we render them meritorious of eternal life by referring them to a supernatural end, and raising them to God.

You see then, Christians, that Religion must begin by the general duties of justice, equity, charity, gratitude, submission and obedience. If you build not on those virtues, the whole edifice of your perfection, being raised on a foundation of sand, will fall to the ground and overwhelm you in its ruins. How comes it that religion is brought every day into disrepute, that she loses the influence she ought to have on the minds of men? It is, because Christians fail in the fundamental principles of justice and integrity; the natural tendency of such a conduct is, to expose Christianity to the censures of the world, to the scoffs of the libertine. I know that we ought to distinguish between religion and those who profess it, that we ought not to confound the sanctity which is peculiar to it, and is one of its essential characteristics, with the disorders of its unworthy and degenerate members. But the world is not impartial enough to make the distinction. On the contrary it eagerly takes hold of any pretext to vilify religion and make it appear in an odious and contemptible light. For it thinks, that whatever religion suffers in the mind of men is so much gained for the cause of impiety and profligacy. When the libertine, who glories in a shameful neglect of religion observes, that

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they, who are seemingly most attached to religion are men of a vindictive spirit, implacable in their resentments, ungovernable in their passions, unmanageable in their temper, proud and haughty in their manner, contracted in their hearts, severe in their censures, oppressive in their conduct, full of artifice and dissimulation in their dealings: and consequently not to be depended on in the ordinary intercourse of social life. He will say to himself with an air of confidence and triumph: What must the religion of such men be; surely, it is no more than an idle speculation, as it does not make them good men, fair traders, safe friends and ornaments to society: they may talk, as much as they please, of sublime maxims and fine lessons, which they never reduce into practice. I know, Christians, that this is false reasoning; however he will reason in this manner, he will think himself authorized to do so by the examples he sees before him. On these examples he will rest the merits of the cause; to them he will refer in support of his hasty decisions; he will pass sentence accordingly to the disgrace and scandal of religion.

You see then, Christians, what mischiefs arise from the vicious conduct of the mere pretender to religion. They seem to imagine, that they may be friends to God, while they are unjust to men; that they may keep in their hands what they have unjustly acquired, and appease the wrath of heaven by external homage, that the multiplicity of their prayers will atone for the indulgence of their unmortified passions, for the want of those virtues, which constitute the friendly man, the good neighbour, the valuable member of society. No; the Almighty will reject with scorn this sort of composition they attempt to make with him. He requires righteousness

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its whole extent. He is not satisfied with an outward shew of devotion, in which the heart has no part. What does he expect from man but his heart? Take away from him the love of the heart, and the soul is dead in the order of grace, as the body is dead in the order of nature so soon as the heart ceases to live.

Now, Christians, what is the conclusion to be drawn from what has been said? It is briefly this: Let the general tenor of your lives be such as may do honour to your holy religion, and make her appear in an amiable light to those, who may be most prejudiced against her. Your exterior practices of devotion, such as prayer, fasting, abstinence are good in themselves, and capable of exciting devout affections in the soul. But then, this is not all that is required of you. Endeavour to raise the edifice of Christian perfection on the foundation of the moral virtues. Let your command over your passions, your patience in adversity, your meekness in receiving injurious treatment, your sincere humility, your fortitude in bearing up under difficulties and afflictions, your fidelity in the discharge of every obligation, your evenness of soul in the various events of life: your sweet, affable and engaging manners excite the admiration, and command the love and esteem of those who behold you. Thus aided by the divine grace, you will gain souls to Jesus Christ, you will sanctify them and sanctify yourselves. Let the purity of your lives bear testimony to the purity of your faith. The Martyrs laid down their lives in the midst of torments, and sealed their faith with their blood in the spirit of meekness: this you ought to be disposed to do, if occasion required it, and prove yourselves disciples of Jesus Christ.

Grant us, O divine Jesus, thy victorious grace, that we may be enabled to follow thee, who art

the light of the world, who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life: give us a proper sense of our holy religion; may we never dishonour it by our practice, nor give occasion to the scoffs and derisions of unbelievers. May our piety be sincere, solid, and rational. May we adore thee in spirit and in truth. May we exhibit religion in her native beauty accompanied by all those virtues, which complete the character of a Christian. May thy example be ever before our eyes, thy maxims in our hearts, and in our lives, may we aspire to that perfection, of which thou art the model, O Author of all sanctity. Thus we may expect to be admitted to those bright abodes of immortality, which our faith points out to us as the glorious inheritance of those, who believe and hope in thee, who love thee, and keep thy commandments. Amen.

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SERMON

S E R M O N XXVII.

ON FORGIVING OUR ENEMIES.

But I say to you, love your enemies. Matt. v. 44.

THUS our blessed Saviour vindicates the law of God, from the false interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees. Allowing the obligation of loving their neighbour in a limited sense of the word, they conceived themselves to be at full liberty to hate their enemies. Happy would it be for the world, if this erroneous opinion were confined to them. How many, who are, or at least profess to be Christians, deem it highly honourable to revenge an affront, and imagine that it would be an indelible stain on their character to overlook or forgive it, We cannot, say they, suffer ourselves to be trampled upon, we must shew a proper spirit, we must insist on satisfaction. This is the only way to support our rank and consequence in life: otherwise we shall be stigmatized as cowards, as mean and despicable beings, who have not the courage to assert their rights.

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You see, my dear Christians, what the peaceable maxims of the Gospel have to encounter from the prejudices of the world, from the tyranny of fashion, from the worst and blackest passions of the human heart. Others who do not pretend to carry their resentment so far, keep up for years, and perhaps during their whole lives, a spirit of rancour and animosity against their offending neighbour. And lastly, there are some, who forgive in words, but not from their hearts. Thus, the law of charity, so strongly enforced by our Redeemer, is either openly and directly attacked, or artfully evaded. Could he have expressed himself in clearer and more positive terms? I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. Observe, Christians, the import of these words, observe the majestic and authoritative tone in which they are delivered. I who can dispose of you, as I please, I from whom you have every thing to hope for, every thing to fear, I who can punish your disobedience with instant death, and plunge both soul and body into everlasting fire; I, who am your King, your Lord, and your God do not only advise you, but I absolutely command you to love your enemies. Now, when our divine Legislator manifests his will, what remains for us to do, but to obey? Can we, weak and dependant creatures, refuse to pay him the homage of universal and unlimited submission? No; whatever the world may say, however painful the sacrifice may be, if my God requires it of me, I must offer it up to him without reserve. This is enough to dissipate the illusions of self-love and silence the clamours of the world. In vain does human ingenuity torture itself to find out plausible pretexts, and specious reasonings to gloss over its enmities and justify revenge. In vain does the world preach

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a different doctrine from that of Jesus Christ. The real Christian condemns what our Saviour condemns, and approves what he approves; him, and him only will he hear. Foreseeing that corrupt nature would raise many obstacles against the performance of this duty, he holds out to us every encouragement. He assures us, that if we comply with it, he will own us for the children of our heavenly Father, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. He clearly shews, that there can be no merit in confining our love to our immediate friends and benefactors. For if you love those that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethen only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens the same? We should cease to be men, if acts of friendship were not capable of gaining our good will; but we are something more than men; we are Christians, we are therefore bound to extend our love even to our declared enemies. So indispensable is the obligation of Christian forgiveness, that no other sacrifice will be accepted as a composition for it. In vain do you multiply your prayers, in vain do you punish yourself by fasting, and other works of mortification, in vain do you bring your costly gifts to decorate and embellish the house of God. All this will be of no avail, while you keep resentment alive in your breast. No; you must leave your gifts before the altar, and be reconciled to your brother.

From this short exposition of my text, and of the passages which precede and follow it, you are already convinced, that it is your duty to forgive your enemies. However, that you may be more fully satisfied on this head, I shall endeavour to illustrate this fundamental point of Christian morality by additional proofs, and engage

gage you to the practice of it by the prevailing motive of your own interest. I am well aware, that the doctrine I preach has many difficulties to encounter, I shall therefore lay before you the most powerful. But as many may be apt to deceive themselves in this particular, and to imagine, that they fully acquit themselves of the obligation, even when they essentially fail, it is necessary to state to you the extent of the obligation, and the manner in which you are to comply with it. This is the substance of what I mean, with the divine assistance, to propose to your consideration in the following discourse. It may be reduced to this single proposition. To forgive our enemies is our duty and our interest. It is our duty will be the subject of the first part. It is our interest will be the subject of the second.

Thou knowest, O my God, how much the preachers of thy divine word stand in need of thy powerful aid, especially when they announce truths against which the world and the passions are in arms. May thy holy grace second and support my feeble efforts. May it descend into the hearts of my hearers, and melt them into sentiments of charity for each and every one of their fellow creatures without exception. May the blood of Jesus streaming from the cross, extinguish all enmities, animosities, and desires of revenge. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of blessed Virgin Mary. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

That we are bound to forgive our enemies, is a truth, which nature, reason, and revelation concur to demonstrate. When I speak of nature, I speak of her in her pure unadulterated

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state, unclouded by the corruption of the heart, unruffled by the passions, divested of her prejudice, and in peaceable possession of her native dignity. That Almighty Being, of whose goodness we all partake, wishes to make us happy, and strongly inclines us to communicate happiness to others. With this view, he has implanted in our breasts, sentiments of love and benevolence towards our fellow creatures. At the sight of distress, we need not wait to be convinced, that it is our duty to administer relief. We feel a compassionate sympathy powerfully working within us. On the same grounds, we may account for the admiration excited in our minds by acts of clemency and forgiveness. Striking instances of this virtue occur even among heathens. Sacred history furnishes them in abundance. We cannot read them without emotion, we are sensibly affected, we applaud them as proofs of true greatness of soul. They shed a purer and a brighter glory around the head of the hero and the conqueror, than all the laurels which encircle his brows. Does not David appear greater in our eyes, when he spares the life of Saul, and prostrates himself at his feet, than when he defeats Goliath. Are we not charmed at his generosity in pardoning Semei, who had basely insulted him, and loaded him with maledictions? Can any thing be more edifying than the reply, when solicited to avenge the indignities offered him, and punish the offender with instant death, he calmly replies: Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bid him to curse David: and who is he that shall dare say, why hath he done so? How amiable is the conduct of Joseph towards his brethren, far from resenting their unnatural behaviour, he apologizes for them, extenuates their guilt, gives vent to all the effusions of fraternal tenderness, and becomes

becomes a father to them and their children. Now, Christians, I appeal to any man of sensibility, if he does not feel his heart glow within him at the bare recital of such glorious deeds. Do not these great and illustrious characters challenge not only his cool approbation, but his highest esteem his warmest affection? If, on receiving an injury, instead of being carried away by the painful feeling of the wound inflicted on us, we were directed by the principles of benevolence engraven on our hearts, what a source of enjoyment should we open to our minds? Forgive, and you will taste the sweets of forgiveness; love your enemies, and you will gain their love; do good to your enemies, and you will enjoy an exquisite pleasure, infinitely superiour to the base gratification of revenge. Allow these generous sentiments their full weight, and influence over you; you will then maintain the dignity of your nature, you will be happy in possessing yourselves in gaining a complete victory over your disorderly passions, the more you reflect on your conduct the greater your satisfaction will be, reflection will give additional relish to your enjoyments: for what your feelings applaud, reason will approve and justify. One of the first dictates of reason is that each individual ought to consult his own peace of mind, his real happiness. Now, I ask you, does the man of a vindictive temper follow this rule? No, from the moment he admits hatred and desires of revenge into his breast, he bids adieu to happiness. He becomes his own tormentor, he is the first victim of the fierce and desperate passions which rage within him, his bitterest enemy could not inflict on him more deadly wounds, than he inflicts on himself. His pleasures are poisoned, his comforts blasted, his life is a burden to him. The sky overcast with clouds, the mountain flood, the sea in a storm are but faint images

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images of the agitations of his wretched soul. An indiscreet expression, a slight neglect, a want of attention are exaggerated into unpardonable affronts; objects appear to his disordered imagination, not as they are in themselves, but as represented by passion. He is haunted by spectres of his own raising, without any real cause of apprehension, he fancies himself threatened with instant ruin, he is filled with imaginary terrors and alarms, he vows vengeance against those, who perhaps never meant to offend him. In the prosecution of his infernal purposes, how many precautions to insure success? A restless anxiety, while he is meditating the destructive plan; what pains to involve himself in guilt and misery. If he should not succeed, he is in despair. If he should be able to accomplish his ends, and glut his rage by the ruin of his enemy, reflection comes too late; he sees, he feels the enormity of his crime; he is torn by the pangs of remorse; the worm that never dies seizes on his heart and preys on his vitals.

We have a striking instance of the effects of this odious passion in the person of Saul, who was raised to the throne of Judah, beloved by his subjects and favoured by the Almighty, had nothing to wish for to be completely happy. But from the moment he conceives an unjust and deadly hatred against David, we may date his ruin. He attempts the life of his best friend, but supposed enemy. At one time by artifice, at another by open violence; restless and uneasy, he is insupportable to himself and others, he enjoys not one happy moment; when he attempts to compose himself to rest, frightful dreams break his slumbers; when he awakes, he dreads the return of the day, well knowing from woful experience, that the light so threatening to others, will not dispel the gloom which is thick and heavy over his soul. Devoured by melancholy,

melancholy, and plunged into the abyfs of despair, he no longer depends on the protection of heaven. In defiance of his God, he tries the pitiful resources of superstition, he questions the ghost of Samuel, he hears the sentence that is to seal his misery, and aggravates his present evils by the certainty of a more dreadful futurity. Oh, Christians, must not that man be lost to all sense of reason, who suffers so destructive a passion to tyrannize over him, and gain the dominion of his heart. Can there be any sweets in the gall of enmity? How unhappy must he be, who is reduced to the sad alternative, of being a prey to remorse or to impotent desires of revenge? Such are the baneful consequences of a passion, the declared enemy of the peace and happiness of individuals of the peace and happiness of society.

Were I to point to you the frightful ravages it has made in every age, I might shew you flourishing cities reduced to ashes, powerful kingdoms laid waste by fire and sword, families torn by convulsions, the husband armed against the wife, the father against the son, the brother against the brother, the bowl of poison prepared, assassination contrived and executed, and daggers plunged into the bosoms of the innocent. Such scenes would should still have before our eyes, if barriers were not raised against the inundations of hatred and revenge. What would become of society, if each individual were allowed to sit in judgment on his own cause, and decide on the measure of satisfaction due to him? Would there be any equity in his decisions? Would he observe a just and nice proportion between the offence and the reparation? No; passion would be a blind guide, it would lead him astray; it would hurry him into the most shameful excesses. Then should we see wholesome laws trampled under foot, respectable magistracy without

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without authority, anarchy and confusion substituted in the place of good order and well regulated government. There would be no end to injuries and retaliations, till the world would become a field of blood: we should then fly to the forest, and take shelter in the haunts of wild beasts, to save ourselves from the more terrible and destructive rage of man. These, O revenge, are thy boasted triumphs, triumphs over which humanity weeps, triumphs which reason and equity condemn, triumphs which religion brands with infamy, even, in this life, and consigns to everlasting torment in the next. In what light does religion teach us, to consider our fellow-creatures: they bear on their foreheads the stamp of the divinity, they are children of the same Father, disciples of the same Master, and heirs of the same glorious kingdom. Yes; we are all members of that one mystical body, of which Jesus Christ is the head. Charity is the bond of that sacred union, which we ought to maintain inviolate. The ties of nature are strengthened by grace, divine love must unite us on earth, if we expect to be for ever united in heaven. How then can the Christian, who professes a religion founded on charity, breathe vengeance against his brother, who is purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ? No; there can be no enmities under the dominion of grace. He, who is actuated by the spirit of Christianity, loves all men without exception, and consequently knows no enemy. If hatred and revenge should take possession of your hearts, charity dies, and then you cease to be Christians. By separating yourselves from your brethren in Christ, you separate yourselves from Christ himself.

Thanks for ever to thee, O blessed Jesus, who hast established the duty of fraternal charity on a foundation that can never fail, and clearly demonstrates

strates by thy precepts and examples that there is no salvation for us, if we do not comply with it. Let the man of an unforgiving, and vindictive temper contemplate Jesus expiring on the cross: and what does he see? He sees the God of glory and majesty humbled to the dust, he sees him treated like the vilest malefactor, a crown of thorns on his head, his hands and feet pierced with sharp nails. He sees him bathed in blood, smarting and agonizing at every pore: he has now but a moment to live, and how does he employ it? O heavens, O earth, O Christians, be attentive, instead of drawing down fire from heaven to consume his barbarous executioners, who cruelly insult him in the midst of his torments, and shock his ears by their horrid blasphemies, he offers up prayers and apologizes for them. Hear O my Father the last request of thy expiring son, punish not in thy wrath thy deluded children, but look down with an eye of pity on them. The blood of Abel cried for vengeance, but mine cries for mercy: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. O ye Christians, my disciples, will you not hear the voice of my blood, which reconciled heaven and earth. Your brother who has offended you is my adopted child: pardon him, as I pardoned my crucifiers. Let my wounds and open side plead his cause, and open your hearts to sentiments of charity and forgiveness. If any thing can arrest the arm of revenge, it must be the sight of you on the cross. If you be not affected at this awful scene and melted into tenderness, I must give you up for lost. In vain is the blood of your Saviour shed for you, if you refuse to forgive. Forgive them that you may be entitled to forgiveness: this is your duty, it is also your interest.

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THE SECOND PART.

That it is your interest to forgive your enemies is a truth so evident, that in order to be convinced of it; you need but appeal to your own hearts. Sound them, and you will discover a fund of corruption; you will discover numberless and grievous offences committed against your sovereign Lord and Benefactor. What would your situation be, had he treated you according to the rigour of his justice? You would have been lost without resource, and condemned to those regions of woe, where a ray of hope never enters. Instead of punishing you, as you deserved, he patiently awaits your return to him, and invites you to repentance. Forgive then and you shall be forgiven. This is the promise of your gracious Lord, on which you may rely with certainty. If you have a spark of faith, if you aspire to everlasting happiness, if you ever bestow a thought on your spiritual necessities, you will feel that you stand in need of mercy and forgiveness, you will daily and hourly implore it, and cheerfully comply with the conditions, on which it is to be obtained. Your God is infinitely good and merciful to you, how then, can you be hardhearted and unforgiving to your fellow-creatures? Could he have offered you easier or more favourable terms: your salvation then is in your own hands. You may write down your name in the book of life. By forgiving a trifling debt to your fellow-creature, you may discharge the immense debt you owe to the divine justice. Weigh on one side your offences against God, and on the other the offences of your neighbour against you, and you will be happy in acquitting yourselves at a cheap rate. All that is wanting is your heart: there be any thing painful in the sacrifice, the grace of your God, ever ready to assist you, will make

make it pleasant. How blind then must you be to your everlasting interests, if you reject the terms, and refuse to forgive? You force your God to withhold forgiveness from you, you bar the gates of mercy and of heaven against yourself; you dictate the sentence of your own condemnation, and overturn the foundation of your hopes. For with the same measure with which you shall mete to others, it shall be measured to you again. If you do not forgive, you shall not be forgiven. No; there is judgment without mercy for him who hath not shewn mercy. In vain do you run to the tribunal of reconciliation, you receive no benefit from its healing powers, you may impose on man by telling him, that you forgive, but if you forgive not from your hearts, the searcher of hearts will condemn you. In vain does the blood of the spotless Lamb flow on the altar, the adorable sacrifice is not a sacrifice of propitiation for you, while you shut your heart against your brother; religion is armed with terrors against you. Even at that awful moment, when you stand most in need of all the charitable succours, and spiritual comforts she can hold out to her children, she commands her ministers to let you die like the unbeliever, who has no hope, if you do not cast out from your hearts the deadly poison of hatred and revenge. And do we not hear of men, who kept up resentment to their last breath, carry it with them to the grave, leave in their very ashes the seeds of future dissensions, whose last and dying request to their heirs is, that they will not fail to avenge their wrongs. How common it, O my God, that man who is but dust and ashes can insult thy sovereign Majesty so far, as to brave all the torments which thy wrath may inflict, and plunge into hell without regret, without remorse.

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This, O Revenge, is thy horrid works, these are the cursed fruits which thou producest, thou leavest nothing sound in that heart, where thou hast once taken root. Even prayer so acceptable to God, becomes an abomination in his sight, when pronounced by a man of an unforgiving temper: instead of drawing down blessings, it returns in imprecations on his guilty head, and seals the sentence of his final reprobation. With what face can he address his heavenly Father in the words of our blessed Redeemer: Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. How can he repeat these words without trembling, when his heart tells him that he does not forgive, that he persecutes his brother with unrelenting rigour, and takes pleasure in saying and doing everything that can hurt and mortify him? The Almighty will judge the wicked servant from his own mouth, he will deal with him, as he deals with his fellow-servant: he will hear his prayer, but alas; it will be to his eternal ruin. Yes, he shall have justice for justice, rigour for rigour, vengeance for vengeance. This is what he prays for, when he does not belie and contradict himself. He does not forgive, he therefore prays the Almighty not to forgive him; he bears a mortal hatred against those who have offended him; he prays the Almighty to bear the same mortal hatred against himself; he cannot prevail on himself to love his enemies; he prays the Almighty to exclude them for ever from his blessed sight; he wishes, that his enemies may feel the weight of his resentment; he prays the Almighty to make him feel the return the full weight of his wrath and indignation. While his heart is embittered by the gall of hatred, he has no mercy to expect; he forfeits his claim to immortal bliss, renounces heaven, takes hell for his choice, gives up his soul, his body, and his all, for all eternity. Oh! do all the

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accumulated evils and misfortunes of life, all the insults and affronts offered him by his bitter enemies, bear any proportion to the everlasting misery, confusion and despair to which he dooms himself?

Christians, what I have laid before you, is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. By this doctrine you are to be judged, by it you are to stand or fall; by it your final and irrevocable doom is to be decided. When you shall be arraigned at the bar of the divine justice, little will it avail you to say, that you complied with the prevailing modes and fashions of the world, that you were extremely attentive to what the world might think of you, that to keep up your reputation in the world, was your greatest concern; that you considered worldly disgrace and infamy as the last and greatest of all evils. A moment's reflection will convince you, that all this shall be exhibited as a charge against you, instead of being admitted as a plea in your favour. The severe and impartial scrutiny shall turn on these few, but comprehensive questions: What was written in the law; how didst thou read? As a Christian what was thy belief? As a Christian what was thy practice? This being the case, is it not strange and unaccountable, that the practice of duelling should become so fashionable, as to furnish the subject of every day's conversation. How is it possible to reconcile it to the doctrine of your divine Legislator and Judge, who commands you to love your enemies. To the several passages of the Gospel, which strongly inculcate patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries and fraternal charity. To the example of our Saviour on the cross, who spent his last breath in prayers and apologies for his barbarous crucifiers. Let me suppose for a moment, that the New Testament were silent on this head, would not the old law stand in full force against

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against you. Thou shalt not kill? How can you escape the malediction of Heaven, so early pointed, against this horrid crime? But what right have you in your own private cause, and by virtue of your own authority, to dispose of your lives as you please, and anticipate the period of your dissolution? Are you not bound to preserve them as long as the Author of your being continues your mortal existence. Let me then conjure you, by the blood of Jesus which was shed for you, by the tender regard you ought to have for the salvation of your immortal souls, to hold for ever in the utmost abhorrence, this barbarous practice unknown even to the heathens. Prove yourselves to be Christians, not in name only but in reality. Let the fruits of your holy religion appear in the regular and uniform tenor of your lives, in your tempers, manners, and conversation. You know from experience; that you have feelings which are easily hurt and wounded; be ever averse from saying or doing any thing, that may hurt or wound the feelings of others. Conscious of your manifold sins and imperfections, make every allowance for the failings of others. Convinced, that every day of your lives you stand in need of mercy and forgiveness, be ever inclined to hold out the hand of pardon and reconciliation to your offended brother. For what purpose, has the Almighty marked out to you respective places in this present state of trial and probation; but that you might devote your lives to his honour and glory here, and qualify yourselves for a life of immortal glory hereafter. And shall a false chimerical honour tempt you to brave the laws of God and man, forfeit your glorious claims, and cut yourselves off for ever from the bright reversion that awaits you? No, there can be no honour in committing an act so highly displeasing to that Almighty Being, who is the source and fountain of all honour and excellence.

lence. Wo to that honour, which plunges so many souls into the night of never-ending darkness and despair. In order to avoid the laughter of fools, you expose yourselves to die by the sword of pride and wrath, and in contention with your brother, you rush into the presence of your Judge, bearing on your fore-heads the marks of your guilt, and the stamp of eternal reprobation. When you shall burn in the flames kindled by the breath of an angry God, will it afford you any consolation, will it mitigate your pains, to think, that you passed in the world for men of spirit, for men of honour.

Let us now consider, in what light this fashionable mode of redress is held by that Church, which is ever guided by the Holy Ghost, that Church against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, that Church with which Jesus Christ has promised to abide to the end of the world, that Church which is the pillar and foundation of truth, that Church which you are commanded to obey under pain of being treated as heathens and publicans. Assembled in her last general council, she thus delivers her sentiments: The detestable practice of duelling introduced and promoted by the devil, for the destruction of soul and body, we earnestly wish to suppress and abolish in the Christian world. Wherefore we decree, that if any emperor, king, prince or potentate shall, within his respective territories, allot a piece of ground for the purpose of duelling, he be instantly excommunicated. As to the duellists themselves and their seconds, we order, that besides the penalty of excommunication which they incur, they be branded with perpetual infamy, and be subjected to all the other canonical penalties usually inflicted on murderers. If either of the combatants, or both, should fall victims to their brutal rage, let them be for ever deprived of Christian burial; they who advise and encourage

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duelling directly or indirectly, as also the spectators, are to be involved in the same sentence of excommunication. This, Christians, is the language of the Church. Interpreter of the will of her divine Head, she has the strongest claims on your respect and obedience. She derives her powers from him, who has said: He that heareth you, heareth me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me. So indispensably necessary is the spirit of charity, so essential to our true interests, that without it all other virtues lose their merit and value, and cannot find acceptance in the sight of God. The annals of the Church furnish us with a striking instance of this truth, in the person of the unfortunate Sappiricius. In the midst of a general persecution, he is apprehended and accused of being a Christian. He boldly confesses the fact, endures the torture with heroic resolution, and is sentenced to die. While he is on the way to the place of execution, a man with whom he had been long at variance presents himself before him, prostrates himself at his feet, bedews them with his tears, and conjures him by the sacred blood of Jesus Christ, shed for them, and by his own which he was soon to shed for the honour and glory of his holy name, to be reconciled to him, and give him his friendship. But the hard-hearted Sappiricius takes no notice of him. He redoubles his solicitations and intreaties. But all to no purpose. Sappiricius continues obdurate and inflexible. He is now arrived at the place of execution, he is on the point of seizing the glorious prize, the crown of martyrdom is before him, when behold, abandoned by the Almighty, and left to his own weakness, he apostatizes from the faith, offers incense to idols, forfeits the crown, and is lost for ever.

Christians, can there be a stronger proof of the necessity of forgiving your enemies? You see a confessor, a martyr we may call him, as he endured

ed torments for the sake of Christ, deprived of grace and glory in consequence of his want of charity. Christians, if any remains of enmity should be lurking in your hearts, have pity at least on your own souls, dislodge the poison as soon as possible; let not the sun go down upon your anger; let the fruit of this discourse be an immediate, sincere and cordial reconciliation with those who have offended you. O Jesus, may thy glorious example be ever present to us, and powerfully engage us to sacrifice our resentments on the altar of fraternal charity. May we never dissolve the sacred bonds which unite us to our fellow-creatures, who are our brethren in thee. May we walk hand in hand in the ways of thy commandments, having but one heart and one soul. May our union on earth be an emblem of that blessed and everlasting union, which subsists between the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem. May charity, the queen of virtues, reign in our hearts here below, and qualify us for being admitted to the bright abodes of immortal bliss, where thou, O God of charity, fillest the souls of thy elect with joy and happiness for ever and evermore. Amen.

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S E R M O N XXVIII.

ON CHRISTIAN VIGILANCE.

What I say to you, I say to all: watch. Mark xiii. 37.

OUR blessed Saviour, who was thoroughly acquainted with the heart of man, with the spiritual evils under which it labours, with the many dangers to which it is exposed, well knew what remedies were to be applied to heal its disorders, what precautions were to be taken to guard and secure it. The lessons, therefore, which the great Physician of our souls delivers on so important a subject, are to be duly attended to, and carefully lodged in our hearts, that they may bring forth fruits of eternal life. Now we find, that he recommends Christian vigilance as an universal remedy, that he repeatedly, and in the strongest terms enforces the necessity of this virtue, which animates all the rest, and gives them their proper bent and direction. If we consider on what occasion, he addresses the words of my text, not to his immediate disciples only, but to all mankind; we shall see, how admirably he proceeds in the course of his reasoning, with what justness and propriety he concludes it. Having foretold the destruction
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of the Temple, the beauties of which they were then surveying, he calls their attention to a more solemn and important event, the final destruction of the world. He describes in a lively manner the signs that are to precede it; but as to the day or the hour, on which it is to take place, he observes, that not even the Angels in heaven know, nor was it expedient for him as our Teacher to inform us of it. In the same place he compares us to servants, whom their Master during his absence intrusts with the care of his business, and who knows not how soon he may return to call them to an account for their conduct. Here, he clearly alludes to the hour of our death, that awful moment on which our all depends for an eternity. If we die friends of God, a glorious immortality awaits us; if we die his enemies, everlasting misery. Now, as to the time, manner, and circumstances of our death, we are totally ignorant of these particulars; we cannot know any thing concerning them without an express revelation from heaven. Let us therefore attend to the conclusion which our blessed Saviour draws from the dreadful uncertainty we are in: Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is: ye know not when the Lord of the house cometh: at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming on a sudden, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch. By this salutary advice he warns us of our danger, and shews us, how we should arm ourselves against it. What a striking proof of his overflowing charity, of his anxious solicitude for our eternal interests! One would imagine, that all his followers would cheerfully obey his commands, and make his instructions the rule of their conduct. But alas, the generality of mankind live in a fatal security, as if they had nothing to fear; in a sluggish indolence, as if the kingdom of heaven were to be obtained without

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without any exertions on their part. While they suffer themselves to be carried away by such illusions, the enemy of their souls takes every advantage of their defenceless state, blinds their understandings, corrupts their hearts, and leads them on an easy prey in the paths of perdition. If we mean to avoid these dreadful evils, we must open our eyes to the dangers that encompass us on every side, we must be on our guard against any surprise, we must make use of the spiritual arms, which our Saviour puts into our hands. So weak is man, so prone to evil, so liable to temptations, that his safety depends on the precautions he takes: otherwise his ruin is inevitable. From this view of the subject, I believe you are already convinced of its importance. It comprizes every thing that regards your salvation; I shall reduce it to two parts, and endeavour in the first, to prove to you the necessity of Christian vigilance in order to be saved; and in the second, to point out to you the principal means which it employs for this purpose.

O divine Teacher, thou hast the words of eternal life, to whom shall we apply for instruction but to thee? Our natural corruption weighs us down; the maxims of the world lead us astray; the enemies of our souls meditate our ruin; our own hearts are in league with them; we must perish, unless thou assist us. Direct us, O my God, by the light of thy heavenly wisdom; cleanse and purify our hearts by thy sanctifying grace, give us strength and resolution to fight thy battles, defeat thy enemies and gain the crown. This must be the fruit of a constant vigilance, an unabating ardour in thy holy service. This gift must come from thee, O giver of all good gifts; vouchsafe then to impart it to us, for we know and feel, how much we stand in need of it. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, whose delight it was to hear
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whatever fell from thy sacred lips, and store it up in her heart, whom thou hast enriched with such treasures of grace and merit, as preserved her pure and unblemished, during the time of her mortal pilgrimage, and fully qualified her for that incomparable glory, which she enjoys in the heavenly Jerusalem. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

Christian vigilance may be defined, an earnest and constant application to avoid evil, and to do good in order to attain everlasting happiness. How necessary this virtue is must appear evident from our situation in this life. When our first parents fell from that state of original justice, in which they were created, sin, death, and a numberless train of evils rushed into the world. Involved in their guilt, we feel its unhappy consequences. Our passions, which ought to be under the control and dominion of reason, rebel against it, and hurry us on with a blind impetuosity to the unlawful gratifications of sense and appetite. To indulge them is to follow the bent of our natural corruption; but to check and resist them requires painful and unremitted efforts. While the heart is in danger of being enslaved by so many tyrants, the understanding is often the dupe of error and ignorance. We set an imaginary value on trifles, and pursue them with eagerness, while we totally neglect the only and necessary business of our salvation. The maxims and opinions of the world weigh more with us than the law of God, than the Oracles of eternal Wisdom. Sensible objects present themselves on every side, and strive to insinuate themselves into our affections. The truths of eternity make but a faint impression on the animal man, whose thoughts lie groveling on the earth, who considers this world as the scene of his satisfactions

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and enjoyments, and looks no farther. The enemy of souls, who goes about seeking whom to devour, finds out such objects as will inflame his passions, seduce his understanding and expose him by a criminal compliance to everlasting misery. The example of others, whom he sees engaged in the same sinful courses, will lull him asleep on the brink of destruction. Now, what security can he have against his inward corruption, against the world and its deceitful maxims, against the contagious example of its children, against the many incentives to vice he will meet with every day; but the nicest caution and circumspection? To shut our eyes to the danger, to fall asleep on our post, to drop our arms, are the greatest evils that can befall us in our spiritual warfare. We are marching through an enemy's country, where we are liable to sudden and frequent attacks, where snares are laid for us on every side, where the paths that seem most pleasant and flowery lead to ruin. To imagine that we have nothing to fear, in so critical a situation, is to lose all sense of reason and religion. Not to exert ourselves, where our all is at stake, argues a degree of folly not to be conceived or described. Oh, if any danger threatened your lives or your fortunes, would you lose any time, would you not instantly guard against it: would you not use every precaution, which human prudence could suggest to you? And now, in the midst of a corrupt world, where almost every thing you see or hear is big with danger to you, who even carry the danger about you, where your immortal souls are exposed to endless evils, you sit down as calm and unconcerned, as if you were in a place of perfect safety; you neglect every precaution, you do not exert yourselves in your own defence. The natural consequence is, that you must fall into the hands of your bitterest enemies. Preserve

serve us, O my God, from that false security which ends in death.

Here, Christians, I must take notice of a mode of reasoning generally adopted in the world. When we recommend a constant and unwearied attention to the great concerns of eternity, many are apt to reply: This indeed may do very well for those who are entirely devoted to God, shut up in cloysters, and secluded from the world. But how can we, who are distracted every moment by the hurry and bustle of the world, find time or leisure for religious exercises? But are you not Christians, are you not children of heaven, and candidates for eternal bliss? If so, you are bound to maintain your title to the glorious inheritance prepared for you. Is it reasonable to suppose, that they, who are in a safe harbour, stand more in need of precautions than you, who are tossed about by the boisterous waves of a tempestuous ocean. The world, in which you live, is a fruitful source of dangers and temptations to you. All its maxims are in direct opposition to the Gospel truths which lead to heaven, it is the enemy of your souls, the enemy of Jesus Christ. Love not the world, says the beloved disciple; for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. Are you not then indispensably bound to guard your hearts against its insidious pleasures, its profane joys, its follies, its vanities. What have you to do with the world, which you have renounced at your baptism? Renounce it then in the practice of your lives, and disengage yourselves from it now by choice, wait not for the time when you must be torn from it by force and violence. This disengagement of heart must be the result of vigorous exertions, seconded by the divine grace; but how can you expect to succeed without them, especially in so weighty a concern, where nothing less is in

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question, than your peace of mind here, and your eternal happiness hereafter. Your natural proneness to sin, your headstrong passions, the many spiritual enemies you have to encounter, the many conflicts you have to sustain, your close connection with the world; your excessive attachment to creatures, your coldness and insensibility with regard to those spiritual and immortal objects, which your faith points out to you, are more than enough to convince you of the necessity of Christian vigilance.

But in order that this truth may sink deeper into your minds; let us reflect for a moment on the gradual progress of vice in the human heart. It has been often and justly observed, that no man becomes completely wicked all at once: no; there are certain degrees of vice and disorder, through which the sinner passes, before he fills up the measure of his iniquities. It is true, our understandings are clouded with error and ignorance, our hearts fraught with corruption, in our present fallen state; however we naturally feel sentiments of abhorrence at glaring guilt: if therefore vice were to appear to us in its whole deformity, we would be shocked at the horrid sight, we would shrink back from its loathsome embraces. But in order to steal into our hearts, it puts on a pleasing and imposing aspect. We have some darling passion which our self-love would wish to indulge, and all we propose to ourselves in the beginning is an innocent gratification. We say to ourselves, can there be any harm in this? We think we can say to our darling passion, so far you shall go, and no farther. But alas, we do not foresee the unhappy consequences. One compliance leads to another, this leads to a third, a habit is contracted; then the will is so weakened as to lose almost the power of resistance; the edge of our scruples is worn off, our favourite passion is importunate in its demands,

mands, and wishes to know no bounds. The evil becomes inveterate, and the viper nourished in our bosom inflicts a deadly wound. Thus, corruption spreads through the heart, and gains an absolute and entire dominion. Thus, a small spark not extinguished in time, produces a general conflagration. Duties, which seemed to us indispensable, are now no longer necessary; and crimes, at the thought of which we would shudder, are now committed without remorse. How is this strange revolution to be accounted for? It is all owing to the want of attention, to the want of Christian vigilance. O sinner, had you adhered to the wise maxim: Resist the beginnings, you would not be the slave of your inordinate passions; no, you would observe them in their rise, when they were beginning to shoot up from your corruption instead of feeding and inflaming them, you would give them a salutary check, and bring them under perfect subjection. You rashly exposed yourself to the danger, and you perished in it. If you say that you could not foresee the dreadful consequences, that followed from such small beginnings; I will answer, that it was your business to foresee and to guard against them. When David first beheld Bethsabee, he little thought that he would become an adulterer and a murderer. Let him therefore, who stands, take heed lest he fall, let him steel his heart against the first impressions which sensual pleasures may make upon it. If you mean to secure your virtue, you must keep at a distance from the danger.

Endeavour then, Christians, to know yourselves; study the motions of your hearts, and discover your prevailing inclinations. If you perceive, that they lead you to what is forbidden, that they run counter to the law of God; watch them with unremitting care and attention, employ every effort against them, and do not give over, until you subdue them.

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them to the dominion of reason and religion. For either you must command them, or they will command you: there is no alternative. You will never enjoy true peace of mind, if you do not pluck up from your hearts those poisonous affections which kill the soul. How necessary, then, is the science of self-government? On it depends your happiness both in time and in eternity. But this science can never be acquired without Christian vigilance. This virtue enables us, to discern the particular species of danger to which we find ourselves exposed; to provide the best means of defence; to improve to the best advantage the graces that are offered us, to persevere to the end, and gain the prize of immortality. The principal means which this virtue employs for this purpose, shall be the subject of

THE SECOND PART.

The principal means, which Christian vigilance employs to secure us against the many dangers of falling into sin to which we are exposed, to guard our hearts against that innate corruption to which they are unhappily so prone, are the holy exercises of fasting and prayer. That fasting powerfully contributes to promote these desirable ends, I shall endeavour to prove to you. But I shall first take notice of a fashionable objection, which is made against it by men of the world. They say; that all virtues reside in the heart, that all their care and attention ought to be directed towards it, that if we regulate its desires and affections, all is well: then they see no necessity for tormenting the flesh by works of self-denial. They will tell you, with an air of triumph, that they know many, who are remarkable for their rigorous fasts, but are not the better for them, who, under the garb of exterior mortification, cloke an unmortified and corrupted

rupted heart. It is true, Christians, the best institutions may be abused; but from the abuse of them, is it fair to conclude, that they are vain and unprofitable, especially, when from the nicest scrutiny into the nature of them, into the reasons, on which they are founded, it would appear evident, that they are highly useful and salutary to our souls. I know that the heart is the seat of every virtue, that it is the vineyard which every Christian is bound to cultivate, improve, and adorn with the fruits of grace; that it is there the dominion of God is to be established, that while the heart is indulged in vice and disorder, fastings, watchings, and other austerities are mere illusions. The reason is obvious: in the case supposed, these acts of self-denial are an outward shew and do not reach the heart. But let the case be altered, let me suppose, that these exterior practices are properly directed, you will find that they are both useful and necessary, that they lead to that interior mortification, the necessity of which you do not call in question. This is a truth, which reason and experience concur to demonstrate. Consider what you are, and what your destination is. You are a compound of soul and body; you are placed here below in a state of trial and probation. This mortal life is but a passage to another, where you are to exist for ever. The time you spend on earth is given you for your improvement in grace and virtue, that you may qualify your souls for immortal bliss, and your bodies for a glorious resurrection. Now, if the two substances of which you are composed acted in concert, and mutually contributed to promote the great end of your creation, if the body were perfectly subject to the soul and amenable to its directions, it would not be necessary to bring it to order by exterior mortifications. But alas, in our present fallen state

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even, the just experience a constant and violent struggle between the flesh and the spirit, as St. Paul observes, when he speaks of a law in his members fighting against the law of his mind. This conflict he felt within himself, and therefore he chastizes his body, and treated it as a slave, lest, while he preached to others, he might become a reprobate. Now, if this great Apostle, who was a vessel of election, and a prodigy of grace, considered the severe discipline of mortification, as necessary for him, can we wretched sinners plead an exemption? No; our repeated falls ought to convince us of the necessity of the same bitter, but salutary remedy, our inferiour appetites are ever craving indulgence, and if they gain it, they will enlarge their demands, usurp the dominion of reason, and enslave the mind. And you know, that when the government of the mind is once lost, the door is wide open for iniquity to enter in. Here your own hearts speak for me. Your own experience will tell you, how often you have been defeated in the combat. Instead of maintaining the superiority of the soul over the body, as you are bound to do, you frequently suffer the body to assume the command, you listen to the suggestions of flesh and blood; you extinguish the light that is within you; you drown the voice of conscience in the clamours and tumults of your passions. And is it not necessary to prevent these dreadful evils by keeping your bodies under the salutary restraints of religious discipline. They are domestic enemies which you always carry about you. If you mean to consult your safety, you must weaken and disarm them. This is to be done by the holy exercise of fasting, by frequent self-denials. Thus, you will deprive the passions of their fuel, and consequently abate their ardour; thus, you will assert the independence of the mind,

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and the superiority of reason. Thus, you will establish the dominion of grace in your souls.

Be assured, Christians, you cannot pretend to to secure a victory over your spiritual enemies, nor save your souls without mortifying the body. No; Christian mortification is the path which leads to heaven. For what is the language of the Gospel? You must walk in the footsteps of your suffering Redeemer, you must crucify the flesh with its concupiscences; you must make your bodies a living sacrifice to God; you must bear about in your bodies the mortification of Jesus Christ. I know, that this is a doctrine little understood in the world, and less practiced; a doctrine for which the generality of Christians, now a days, have very little relish. Attend to the conduct of many of them, and you will be lead to conclude, that to indulge their bodies is the chief business of their lives. They imagine, that they signalize themselves, when they commit those shameful acts of intemperance, which debase their noblest faculties, disfigure the divine image, and render their souls in a manner brutal. Of them it may be said, that their god is their belly, and their glory is their shame. Be cautious then Christians, how you gratify the body. It will first call upon you for the necessities of life, it will seek for its comforts and conveniences. This point being gained, it will hurry you on to superfluous pleasures and enjoyments, and lastly to satisfactions which are absolutely criminal. Now, in order to counteract this process, what must you do. In the first place, you must exert your authority over it, and absolutely deny it, whatever is unlawful; then you must retrench what is superfluous; next you must wean your hearts from an excessive attachment to such comforts and satisfactions, as may be innocent of themselves; and lastly, you must not be over anxious, impatient,

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Now, if you mean to advance in the ways of perfection, which I have pointed out to you, and this you are bound to aim at by your vocation to the Christian faith; try what fasting can do, and you will soon experience its power and efficacy. Let your souls be filled with sentiments of the highest respect for this holy exercise which is consecrated by the example of Jesus Christ, the model of all perfection. He, who was innocence itself, did not stand in need of fasting, but he wished to convince us of its necessity, and in order to make the remedy more palatable to us, he tasted it first himself. Go on then with courage and alacrity in that penitential career, which the Church, ever anxious to promote your eternal interests, has opened for you. But let other good works accompany and recommend your fasts. Let prayer in particular be your darling occupation, especially at this holy time, when the Church redoubles her tears and supplications, and sends her ardent sighs to heaven in behalf of her children. Conscious of our weakness and corruption, we know that our endeavours will be ineffectual if not seconded by the divine assistance. We must continually look up to the throne of grace, and endeavour to draw down from thence those supplies of strength, which are absolutely necessary for us. If left to ourselves, we are lost for ever. We must then be supported by that powerful hand, which is able to save us from destruction. Christians, there is no security for us if we do not dwell in the protection of the Almighty, under the shadow of his wings.

Now, by constant prayer we keep up an happy intercourse with him; in consequence of which he considers us as his dutiful and obedient children, and pours down on us his choicest graces and blessings. Does he not give us every encouragement

to persevere in this salutary exercise? Does he not repeatedly assure us, that he can refuse nothing to humble and fervent prayer? Does not our blessed Saviour declare, that if we ask the Father any thing in his name, he will give it to us? Unite your prayers to those of so many pious souls, who, throughout the world, are now offering an holy violence to heaven. Enable us, O my God, by thy victorious grace to carry on that contest, which is to last for life. Defend us against thy enemies; guard us in the hour of danger, and suffer not those souls to perish, which thy beloved Son has purchased at the price of his blood. We are a compound of weakness, but our confidence is in thee. We are unable to help ourselves. Help us then, O Lord, and deliver us for the glory of thy name. May our prayers ascend like grateful incense before thee, and find acceptance in thy sight. May these days, consecrated to mortification and penance, be days of salvation to us. May we, by spending them in a Christian manner, dispose ourselves for celebrating the glorious mystery of the resurrection of Jesus. May we rise from the death of sin to the life of grace, from the life of grace to the life of glory. Amen.

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S E R M O N XXIX.

ON THE TEMPER OF THE MIND.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.
 Luke ix. 23.

TO deny ourselves is one of those maxims of Christian perfection, which it highly concerns us to study and reduce to practice. No doubt, it will sound harsh in the ears of those, who seem to live for no other purpose but to gratify their evil inclinations. In this and in many other points they pretend, that the Gospel requires too much, because corrupt nature and inordinate self-love cry out against any restraint. But has not our divine Legislator a full right to the obedience of his creatures? Ought not his holy law to be the rule and standard of their actions? Are they not bound to submit their will and their understanding to the unerring Oracles of infinite Wisdom. Yes, when he speaks, and reveals to us such truths, as are beyond the reach of our narrow comprehension, it is the business of reason to listen in humble silence, and adore. Here lies the merit of faith, that virtue, which inclines us to bow down our understanding to the superior authority of divine revelation.

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tion. Again, when he delivers those pure and sublime precepts of morality, which declare war against the passions, against the irregular motions of the human heart, is it not our duty to force our stubborn will into compliance with the will of God, however painful the conflict may be, whatever opposition we may meet with from that inbred corruption, to which we are unhappily so prone? This is the triumph of grace over the weakness of nature: this lays the foundation of our present and future happiness. Now, when the will and the understanding are brought under perfect subjection, the whole man gives himself up to his Maker, whose property he is, he fills the station assigned him here below, that of a dependant and obedient creature. From what has been said, we may form a general notion of self-denial. But as the consideration of this virtue, taken in its full extent, might lead us too far, it will be more to our purpose to confine ourselves to that particular branch of it, which relates to the government of our temper, humour, dispositions, and inclinations. Here we may observe, that the bulk of mankind are apt to fall into a dangerous illusion. They place a good temper on the same footing with a good constitution of body. They consider it as a natural blessing, for the want of which they are not accountable. It is true, some are born with more favourable dispositions to virtue than others. But this is no apology for those who indulge their natural depravity, and take no pains to oppose the corruption into which temper may lead them. There is no temper so vicious, but may, with the assistance of the divine grace, be corrected and reformed. Every excuse then taken from this quarter is frivolous and insufficient, and will be rejected as such at the tribunal of heaven. On the other hand, there is no temper so good, as not to stand in need of cultivation and improvement. The best natural

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natural dispositions, may be easily perverted, if we do not cherish them with care, and endeavour to bring them to maturity. For, while we sleep, tares will grow up in the field, where the good grain was sown. Though the soil be good, the labour and attention of the husband man must not be wanting. It is not enough then, that nature be favourable; religion must come into her aid, and water with the dew of heaven what she has planted.

It is thy grace, O my God, that can give to the virtuous inclinations, which thou hast formed in us, that stability and perfection without which they cannot be depended on. For, if the temper be under the salutary restraints of religious discipline, the passions will be kept within proper bounds; vice will be banished, and virtue introduced in its stead. I need not say more to convince you of the importance of the subject, which I mean to propose to your consideration in the following discourse. In the first part, I shall endeavour to prove to you the necessity of correcting and reforming a bad temper, and of improving and perfecting a good one: and in the second, I shall explain what the habitual temper of the good Christian ought to be, with respect to God, to his neighbour, and to himself.

O Thou, who hast formed the heart of man, whose all-piercing eye sees the depth of its misery and corruption, cleanse and purify it, take possession of it, and reign sole Lord and Master of its affections. Destroy what is vicious in it, perfect what is good, and restore thy own work to its original beauty. O Lord, thou hast said, that if we mean to be thy true disciples, we must deny ourselves; may thy words take deep root in our hearts, may the fruits of them appear in our lives and conversations, may we never gratify temper, humour, or inclination, at the expence of what we owe to thee,

thee, at the risk of our immortal souls. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers, through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, who had no other will but thine, whose perfect obedience to thee qualified her for those extraordinary privileges which she enjoyed on earth, for that eminent degree of glory which she enjoys in heaven. We salute her in the words of the Angel. *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

We have every reason to admire the works of Providence in that prodigious variety of living creatures, which people the world, and rise above each other by a regular gradation in the scale of existence. On a more accurate survey we observe those shades of difference, by which the individuals of the same species are distinguished. It is rare, if not impossible, to point out two men who are perfectly alike in every particular. Now, if from the physical we carry our researches into the moral world, we shall find that the same variety universally prevails. Each man has his own way of thinking, his favourite inclinations, his character, humour, temper, his weak side, or to say all in a few words, a bent and turn of mind peculiar to himself. Now it is evident, that nothing but a close and constant attention to these several particulars, seconded by the divine grace, will enable him to keep his passions under strict government, and prevent their hurrying him beyond the bounds which reason and religion prescribe. One of the unhappy consequences of our present fallen state is, that the flesh wars against the spirit, that we experience a constant and violent struggle between duty and inclination, a perpetual tendency to vice and disorder. Under this general weight of corruption all mankind groan. But there are some, who give strong and early proofs of an unhappy temper;

temper ; of perverse dispositions, and unruly appetites. It is easy to foresee, that an unrestrained indulgence of their lawless desires must end in ruin. If you consult the history of mankind, you will find, that this has been the source of all those crimes, which have disgraced humanity, disturbed the peace and order of society, and deluged the earth with blood. What enraged Cain against Abel, and prompted him to imbrue his hands in the blood of his brother ? Was it not his envious and jealous temper, which could not bear that another should be more highly favoured than himself ? The jealousy of Saul against David was the torment of his life. In the beginning he might have easily subdued this vicious propensity, but when he had indulged it for years, he lost all command of himself, and fell into a state of melancholy madness. I need not recur to past ages to convince you of a truth, which every day's experience sets before your eyes in the clearest light. You all know, that where temper and humour are allowed to govern instead of reason and religion, no orderly conduct can be expected, but on the contrary, every species of vice and disorder. Let me suppose, for instance, that a man is of a hasty, passionate, and vindictive temper ; now, I ask you, what happiness, what peace of mind can he enjoy ? Every thing is a source of disturbance and vexation to him, a word, a look, trifles, light as air, are enough to ruffle and discompose him, the least opposition to his humour raises a storm in his breast, he frets, he foams, he swears, he blasphemes, he vows vengeance against those, whom he ought to consider as his best friends. In the mean time, the enemy of his soul takes every advantage of his weakness. He magnifies the supposed affront, he recalls it to his remembrance ; he opens the wound afresh, when it was beginning to close ; he inflames and envenoms it, to such a degree, that nothing else can

can assuage the torments he endures but the sweets of revenge. Now, is not such a man accountable for the excesses, into which temper hurries him? No doubt he is; if he allowed himself a moment's reflection, the folly and absurdity of his conduct would stare him in the face, he would see what an enemy he is to himself, and how many mischiefs arise from his giving loose reins to that unhappy temper, which he was bound to keep under strict command. For what purpose was reason given him, but to check and control his vicious propensities? But when he refuses to listen to the cool dictates of reason, and suffers himself to be swayed by his violent inclinations, he degrades himself to a level with the brute creation; forgets his native dignity; and to speak the language of holy Writ, is compared to the beasts of the field, and made like unto them. As to religion, it is clear, that it has no power over his heart; if it had, the proofs of it would appear in that spirit of meekness and gentleness which it breathes, in a patient and forgiving temper formed on the meekness of Jesus Christ, which ought to be the model of every Christian.

But the hasty, and impatient act in direct opposition to the maxims of their divine Teacher, who commands them to learn of him, because he was meek and humble of heart. They may retain the Christian name, but they are strangers to the Christian spirit. Now, can they say, that grace is wanting to them? No; the Almighty knows how to adapt his graces to our respective characters, dispositions and exigencies; he suffers us not to be tempted beyond our strength. At one time he enables us to fight and conquer the enemies of our salvation; at another time he averts the impending danger by favouring and securing our retreat. Our misfortune is, that we do not instantly seize on the happy moment, when grace courts our ac-

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ceptance, instead of co-operating with it, we resist it, we slight and reject it. The natural consequence of our infidelity is, that left to ourselves we fall; when supported by the divine aid we would stand firm and unshaken. Another man is of an envious, peevish, and discontented temper: every object appears to him, not as it is in itself, but in the dark colours, in which his disordered imagination represents it. He strives to blacken the fairest and brightest characters; he ascribes their best actions to the worst motives; the more good qualities they possess, the more hateful they are in his sight; he views with an evil eye the success of some, he feeds on the disappointments of others; he has the means of happiness in his hands, but he has not the dispositions requisite to enjoy it; he murmurs and complains without reason, merely because it is his humour: and, as if there were not real evils enough in the world, he brings in imaginary ones to supply the place. Now, Christians, can any thing be more contrary to reason and religion than such an unhappy frame of mind. Pride lies at the bottom of all this. If pride were banished from our hearts, we would no longer repine at our situation in life, we would be thankful for the blessings bestowed on us, we would also enjoy the happiness of our fellow-creatures. What a stranger must the envious man be to that most heavenly virtue, I mean charity, which thinks no evil; charity, which induces us to view the conduct of our brethren in the most favourable light, to bear one another's burdens, to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep.

The third class of men, I shall here take notice of, are the rude and contentious, who by the roughness, and hardness of their manners, shock every one with whom they have any thing to do. One would imagine, that they had no other

other object in view, but to disturb the peace of mankind, and blast that small share of comfort, which Providence has allotted us here below. They dispute about trifles with the same heat and eagerness as if the general interest of society were concerned. To differ from them in opinion is an unpardonable crime. In order to be in peace with them, you must give them up every thing. The most forcible reasonings are lost upon them, for such is their humour, that they will not listen to reason, when it comes in competition with their own favourite notions. They are determined to carry every thing before them by the dint of noise and clamour, by an earnestness and violence in their manner, which seems to bid defiance to all opposition. They are armed at all points, as if the rest of men were not their brethren, but their enemies. Now, can such a temper be reconciled to any principle of reason or religion? Men of this stamp are not in peace with themselves, and by disturbing the peace of others, they are the bane of society. The storm first rages in their own breasts, and then they let it loose on the world. They act in direct opposition to the will of the Almighty. For he has united us together by the closest ties; but they break the bonds of union, and disunite man from man. Religion teaches us to maintain, as far as it may depend on us, a constant and inviolable peace with all mankind; but they are in a state of open war; they attack their brethren without any provocation, and are determined to give no quarter. How can such fierce and desperate spirits be qualified to enter those bright abodes, where peace and harmony forever reign.

It would be endless to enumerate the many evils that flow from the poisoned source of ungoverned temper and humour. Why are the rich, the great, and the powerful exposed to so many dangers

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From their situation in life, they do not see the necessity of restraining their temper in any thing: they are surrounded by a croud of artful sycophants, who from motives of self-interest study to please them in every thing, to find out their weak side, and take every advantage of it. Why are youth subject to so many disorders? For want of experience, or attention to know or study themselves; they take no precautions against their temper; they are not watchful enough to keep it within bounds, nor firm enough to oppose its corruptions. Although the temper should be naturally good, it is absolutely necessary, that it be under the direction and control of reason and religion. Solomon was born with the happiest dispositions: but did not his foolish complaisance for idolatrous women make him an idolater? Experience teaches us, that the best natural dispositions may be easily perverted. They are like those fair blossoms, which are blasted by the least breath of an unfavourable wind. Let me suppose, for instance, that a man is of a soft, easy, and pliable temper. This you will say, is a rich soil, from which a plentiful harvest of virtue and good works may be expected. Yes; but the soil may degenerate for want of care and cultivation. A man of such a character is like wax, susceptible of every impression. He is exposed to the snares of the enemy, to the contagion of bad example, to the seductions of the world. If he be not on his guard, he will be apt to fall in with the passions of those, with whom he associates, to share in their guilt, and follow them in the paths of perdition.

How necessary then is that firmness, that command of temper, which grace alone can enable us to maintain. Another reason, why we should not depend too much on our natural dispositions, on a mere constitutional goodness, is, that if our actions do not proceed from a higher source, they cannot

cannot be meritorious of eternal life. No; mere natural motives bear no proportion to that state of supernatural bliss, which ought to be the constant object of our thoughts and desires. In order to be saved we must live by faith, divine grace, and the spirit of Jesus Christ must influence our actions. The good we do must be done for God, otherwise we cannot be entitled to the rewards promised to his faithful servants. So dangerous is the influence of temper and humour, that we ought to be on our guard against them, even in our exercises of devotion. If they should steal in upon us on such occasions, it is to be apprehended, that indispensable obligations will be neglected, because they are not to our taste; and minute observances substituted in their stead, because they fall in with our humour. In this case, the esteem of men will be courted with eagerness, when the glory of God ought to be the only object in view. Pride and self-love will retain some grains of that incense, which ought to burn purely in honour of him, to whom all praise, honour and glory are entirely due. The vices and imperfections of humour and temper will appear in harsh censures, in an intemperate zeal, in a positive and stubborn spirit which abounds in its own sense. Study then, Christians, to acquire the Gospel virtues; they can never come from natural constitution; they are the only ones to be depended on. They are all comprized in the virtue of self-denial, that virtue which makes us die to ourselves, and live to our God.

I believe you are fully convinced of the necessity of correcting and reforming a bad temper, and of improving and perfecting a good one. I now proceed to shew you, what the habitual temper of the good Christian ought to be with respect to God, to his neighbour, and to himself.

THE SECOND PART.

The good Christian is devout towards his God, benevolent to his fellow-creatures, meek and humble as to himself. In the first place, he is devout towards his God : wherever he casts his eye, he discovers traces of the divine perfections; in the works of nature he beholds the wonders of an Almighty hand, from the effects, he goes up to the first cause, from created objects to the eternal source of all beauty and excellency. Such contemplations fill his soul with awe and veneration for that infinite Being, who has raised so many living creatures, not that he might receive, but that he might impart to them all such portions of happiness, as their respective natures and faculties might be capable of. But when he considers the many benefits conferred on himself, he is transported with love and gratitude. In the silence of solitude, or in the midst of the tumult and bustle of the world, he walks in the presence of his God, whom he loves as the best of Fathers, as the most generous and disinterested Benefactor. He hears his voice, obeys his commands, and serves him with cheerfulness, fervour and transport of joy ; he is ever ready to give fresh proofs of his fidelity and attachment. To do the will of his heavenly Father is his meat and his drink, when rising above his material world he contemplates the glorious immortality purchased for him by the labours, and sufferings, and precious blood of his Redeemer. Oh, then his heart glows within him, he feels emotions too big for utterance. Christians, do not such prospects enlarge and improve the mind, do they not give it a foretaste of those endless joys prepared for us in the heavenly Jerusalem ? Here, and here only is to be found that divine peace, which surpasses the understanding, which the world can
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neither give nor take away. The devout Christian is raised above those petty disturbances, which rustle and agitate the minds of others; in every thing that befalls him, he adores the will of God. He is perfectly resigned to the appointments of Providence, he says from the bottom of his heart: Father, not my will, but thine be done. He lays his cares and his troubles at the foot of the cross, and rests securely under its shade. This happy temper qualifies him for discharging properly every duty in life. The love of God is essentially connected with the love of man; accordingly, he is benevolent towards all his fellow-creatures, he feels for distress, wherever he sees it. If he cannot entirely remove the burden of misery, under which the unhappy sufferer groans, he endeavours to lighten it for him, and to sooth his aching heart. For the follies and weaknesses of others he makes every allowance, which humanity and charity can suggest, and while he beholds the mote in his brother's eye, he remembers the beam in his own. Conscious of his own imperfections, he does not arrogate to himself the right of judging the servant, who stands or falls to his own Master. He views the actions and the conduct of men, in the clear sunshine of charity and goodnature. Severe to himself, and indulgent to others, he is ever ready to point out their good qualities, and to hide their defects. Courteous, and obliging to all, he studies not to give the least offence; but to promote, as far as in him lies, the peace and happiness of mankind. In his intercourse with others, he will meet with many tempers quite different from his own; he will adapt himself to them all, as far as the law of God will allow. He will become all to all, in order to gain them to Jesus Christ. He knows, that mankind is a body composed of individuals, who naturally love and esteem themselves, who consequently wish to be loved

ed and esteemed by others; he manages their delicacy with a charitable tenderness, so as not to inflict the least wound. His civility and condescension are to be carefully distinguished from that studied smoothness of manners, which is to be learned in the school of the world. This is a cloke, under which, the crafty and designing often hide the basest purposes. But his civility flows from a higher and purer source, from the best and most generous principles; it is the result of the native effusions of his heart, it is the genuine offspring of that divine charity, which in his greatest enemy makes him see a brother. Christians, is not such a man an acquisition to society? How happy would the world be, were it composed of such characters? Then by our union and harmony on earth, we would rival the society of the blessed in heaven. O holy and perfect charity, we cannot expect to see thee here below pure, and without alloy; this blessing is reserved for us in our heavenly country. But while we are in this vale of tears, we will continually sigh for thee, and endeavour to purchase thee by the painful sacrifice of our feelings, and inclinations. We will maintain peace with men by waging war with our own hearts.

Christians, this world is a stage, on which the passions, humours, and tempers of men act many different parts; it is therefore extremely difficult to be in peace with them all. How great then must the merit of the good Christian be, who contributes all in his power to promote universal harmony, who makes a sacrifice of his own temper and humour, whenever the love of God, and the love of the neighbour requires it. This he cannot do without an extraordinary grace, without the powerful aid of his divine Master, who so patiently bore the weaknesses and imperfections of his disciples. He constantly looks up to him as the standard of perfection; he

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studies to imitate the meekness and humility, which he displayed during the whole course of his mortal life. Accordingly, he is meek and humble of heart. Conscious of his unworthiness, penetrated with a deep sense of his misery and corruption, he is neither surprised nor provoked, if the world should ill-treat and despise him; this he considers as his due; he cannot expect to fare better than his Master, whom the world ill-treated and despised before him. Instead of giving vent to impatience by murmurs and complaints, he rejoices, that he is accounted worthy to suffer contumely for the name of Jesus. He forms no imaginary claims on society, founded on a notion of his own excellence; for he has no opinion of himself, and therefore, if no notice should be taken of him, he is not disappointed. Thus, what appears intolerable to flesh and blood becomes easy to him, who views things with the eyes of faith, who has Jesus Christ for his model, and the Gospel for his rule. He knows that his divine Lord passed through the rugged ways of humiliation, before he entered into his glory; he must, therefore, imitate the humble Jesus, if he expects to be united to Jesus glorified. He detests that cursed pride the fruitful source of all our miseries; for he knows, that whatever good may be in him comes not from himself, but from the Giver of all good gifts. To him therefore he refers all the honour and glory thereof. He envies not the superior talents or abilities of others; he sincerely rejoices in their success; he is happy to see his divine Master better served and more honoured by them, than by himself. He sits down in the lowest place, convinced, that there can be no danger in his humbling himself as much as possible, but that there is every danger in his raising himself above the meanest of his fellow-creatures.

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Now, Christians, is not a man of such a temper strongly guarded against those affronts and insults, which worldlings so loudly complain of, against those bickerings and contentions which are the torments of their lives? Yes; supported by the divine aid, he resists the assaults of passion, checks the rising of anger, and keeps his soul in peace. The Almighty, who gives his grace to the humble, strengthens and fortifies him. He is possessed of a greatness of soul, which nobly scorns to engage in those broils, which embitter the minds of others. It is true, he is not insensible; he may feel for a moment, but then his feelings are under the government of reason and religion, and their dictates he is determined to obey, whatever corrupt nature may say to the contrary. O my God, how powerful is man, when assisted by thee, how weak, when left to himself! I appeal to yourselves, if there be a set of men on earth, who are more exposed to the insurrections of ill-humour, to the vexations of disappointments, to all the disorders of their unmortified passions, than the proud, and the haughty, who are ever setting themselves above the rest of their fellow-creatures, claiming attentions to which they are not entitled, and idolizing themselves in their own hearts? How is this to be accounted for? The Almighty resists the proud, and withdraws his graces from them. How necessary then is the spirit of humility, if we mean to be in peace with ourselves or with others? In vain does human policy pretend to control the passions. It may, indeed, restrain those public outrages and crimes, which would be subversive of society, but human laws can extend no farther than to the actions of men. Religion strikes at the root of the evil by regulating the temper and inclinations. Religion enables us to bear up with fortitude against the vicissitudes of this changeable life, it gives us a calmness and composure of soul in the

most trying situations ; it reconciles us to the jarring humours, and unruly tempers we meet with every day, it makes it our duty and our interest to provide for our present and future happiness by establishing a solid peace in our souls.

Thanks for ever to thee, O blessed Saviour, who revealed to us those sublime truths, which unassisted reason could have never discovered. Thou requirest, O Lord, the sacrifice of our hearts. We give them up to thee ; take them to thyself, and make them such as they ought to be. May we ever be attentive to our natural dispositions, and lay the axe to the root by a thorough reformation of our interior. Grant us grace, O my God, to repress and subdue our vicious inclinations, to triumph over our domestic enemies, and then, we shall have nothing to fear from abroad. If thou be for us, who can be against us ; who shall be able to separate us from thee, when once thy divine love shall have strongly united us to thee ? May this pure love reign in our hearts here below, may it qualify us for reigning with thee for ever in heaven. Amen.

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ON ALMSDEEDS.

He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him; how doth the love of God abide in him? First Epistle of St. John iii. 17.

THE beloved disciple, filled with the Spirit of God, every where recommends the love of the neighbour. This divine virtue is to appear, not in words only, or in outward professions, but in deed and in truth. He shews how far it is to be carried, when he declares, that we are even obliged to lay down our lives when the salvation of a brother's soul requires it. He concludes, that we are bound to relieve our brother in distress, when it is in our power so to do; otherwise, the love of God cannot abide in us. This, in a few words, is the substance of his reasoning, whence it is clear, that they, who are in affluence, cannot love their God, nor save their souls, if they do not share the blessings they enjoy with their indigent fellow-creatures, from whom Providence has withheld them. And yet, Christians, there are rich men in
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the world who seem to suppose, that they are rich only for themselves, whose thoughts are entirely bent on seeking their own ease and convenience, who steel their hearts and shut their hands against the necessities of their fellow-creatures; who take care they answer demands of luxury, while they suffer the poor to languish unpitied and unrelieved. Others are indeed more reasonable; they are convinced, that works of charity are highly pleasing to the Father of mercies; accordingly, they now and then distribute a share of their worldly substance among those who apply to them for relief. At the same time, they consider whatever they do in this way, not as a matter of strict obligation, but as left entirely to their own discretion. They are pleased with themselves, as if they had exceeded the line of duty, whereas in reality they have done nothing but what they are obliged to do. It is not meant hereby, that any one be deprived of that heartfelt satisfaction, which springs up in the soul from the god-like exercise of doing good. However, we must not overvalue ourselves for giving that relief to our fellow-creatures, which we are bound to give them. But it is necessary to form a proper judgment on the subject before us, and to know where our obligation lies, and how far it extends. To prevent any mistake on a matter of such importance is the main purport of the following discourse. In the first part I shall endeavour, with the divine assistance, to lay before you the necessity and advantages of almsdeeds; in the second, I mean to answer the several objections raised against the observance of this duty, I shall conclude with a few reflections on the particular object of charity we ought to have in view on the present occasion.

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not insensible to the miseries they labour under in this vale of tears. Enlighten our understandings that we may clearly see our duty, inflame our hearts that we may faithfully discharge it. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of thy blessed Mother, whom we address in the words of the Angel, *Hail Mary*.

THE FIRST PART.

That we are obliged to relieve the distressed members of Jesus Christ, is evident from the many passages of holy Writ, particularly from that of Saint Matthew, where he describes what is to happen at the general judgment: on that great day on which we are to render an exact account of all our works: many will be condemned to everlasting torments. The Saviour of the world will pass the dreadful sentence in the following terms: Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and ye gave me not to eat, I was thirsty and ye gave me not to drink, I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked and you clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me. The unhappy, in vain, shall reply: Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not give you the necessary relief? The answer shall be, that as long as they refused the works of mercy to the least of their brethren, they refused them to himself. Christians, let us reason a while on these remarkable words. It is certain that the Almighty will never condemn any person, but for the violation of a duty which he was strictly bound to fulfil: whereas then, he condemns many for want of charity to their fellow creatures; it is clear, that the exercise of this charity must be a matter of obligation.

obligation. Our Saviour muſt have alleged many other charges, but this is the only charge he inſiſts upon; can there be a ſtronger proof of the importance of the precept? It follows alſo from the paſſage before us, that Chriſt has ſubſtituted the poor in his ſtead, and that he pleaſed to conſider what is done to them as done to himſelf. Now, Chriſtians, let me aſk you, if you had lived in the happy times in which our Saviour appeared on earth, clothed in the robes of human nature and that he demanded of you the rights of hoſpitality, with what pleaſure would you not receive the divine gueſt? Would you not be transported at the exceſs of his condeſcention in applying to you, knowing that the Lord of the univerſe did not ſtand in need of your favours? Would you not embrace the opportunity of meriting ſomething at his hands? And where is your faith, when you did not liſten to your God, who commands you to give to the poor, what you would ſo cheerfully beſtow on himſelf. Do you think he will forget what you do on his account? No he is faithful in his promiſes; not even a cup of cold water given in his name, ſhall go without its reward. I ſhall only produce another paſſage of holy Writ in ſupport of what is here advanced. It is taken from the firſt epiſtle of Saint Paul to Timothy, where the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles conjures his diſciple to charge the rich, to do good, to be rich in good works, to give freely, to communicate to others, to lay up in ſtore for themſelves, a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life.

You know, Chriſtians, that we are all bound to live in ſuch a manner, as to lay the foundation of a reaſonable confidence; that, after the ſtorms of this life, we may be admitted to that haven of bliſs, where there is an uninterrupted

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calm. The particular means, wherewith divine Providence has furnished the rich towards attaining this desirable end, are, to sanctify their riches by making a proper use of them, to dry up the tears of the widow and orphan, to be the protectors of their distressed brethren, who look up to them for relief. If they take no notice of the charge here given them by the Apostles, they have then laid no foundation against the time to come, instead of being full of good works, they will be found empty, and consequently they can expect nothing else, but to be doomed to everlasting misery. The light of reason alone would be sufficient to clear up this point. We observe a surprizing inequality in the several departments of life, some are quite at their ease and have every thing they can wish for, on these Providence showers down her choicest blessings; the dew of heaven, the fatness of the land, seems to be only for them. At the same time, a great part of mankind are destitute, not only of the conveniencies, but of the common necessaries of life; they are a prey to hunger and wretchedness, their very existence is a burthen to them. Now can it be supposed, that the Almighty in his infinite wisdom has left so many of his living images without any resource? Is he not the common Father of the poor as well as of the rich? Have the poor no share in his paternal regards? They certainly have; his intention is that the rich and poor be of mutual service to each other, that the rich contribute to the relief of the poor, and the poor to the salvation of the rich. In a word, both rich and poor are to maintain their title to a better life, the former by the works of mercy and charity, the latter by their patience, humility and voluntary dependance. Again, the rich are to give an account of the use they make of their riches; we may consider them as stewards

ards and managers thereof; the Almighty is the great and universal proprietor, to whom they are bound to pay homage for what they possess. It is true; the glory of the supreme Being knows no increase or diminution, whether we honour him or honour him not, however he requires of his creatures an acknowledgment of their dependance; he requires of the rich, in particular, a tribute of gratitude for the temporal favours they hold under him, and this tribute is to be paid out of their worldly substance. But as he does not stand in need of any part of their riches, he has made over his right on the poor, he has appointed them to receive the sacred gifts which are due to him, and offer them up to heaven.

Christians, if the consideration of your duty cannot engage you to be charitable to your fellow creatures, at least you cannot be insensible to your own interest. For we have the promise of God for it, that what we give to the poor shall be amply repaid us. He that sheweth compassion to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and the Lord will make him a proper return. You lend a sum of money to a man of an unexceptionable character, who is both able and willing to pay you; you think yourself safe in having his word for the payment. How then can you doubt of word of God, who says, that he will repay you with interest? We see the promise partly fulfilled even in this life. The families in which a charitable disposition is hereditary, kept up from age to age by the fostering hand of the Almighty; his particular Providence watches over them, and crowns them with temporal blessings. On the other hand, we may observe, that the hard hearted, who oppressed the poor, often feel the scourge of the divine wrath; their impious race is swept off the face of the earth, they leave no traces behind them where they once made a figure.

gure. To them we may apply what the royal Prophet so nobly describes ; I saw the impious man raised and exalted like the cedars of Libanus ; I passed by and lo ! he was not to be found. But if we consider what the charitable receive in the spiritual way, we shall find them amply rewarded. It is mentioned in holy Writ, that sins are redeemed by the works of mercy and charity : our Saviour desires us to give alms, and declares that all things shall be clean to us. At the same time it is certain, that no actual sin is forgiven without repentance, but the grace of repentance has been often obtained through the prayers of the poor. They, who are in easy circumstances, stand particularly in need of these powerful intercessors ; their situation in life exposes them to many dangers. But whatever abuses they may be guilty of, the mercy of God is able to repair them ; their alms deeds will offer an holy violence to heaven, and disarm the divine vengeance. How pleasing to the Almighty the works of mercy and charity are appears from the following passage, every word of which deserves particular attention : Happy, says the royal prophet, the man who is truly sensible to the distress of the poor and the needy ; the Lord will deliver him on the evil day ; he will give him ease on the bed of his sufferings ; he will not give him up into the hands of his enemies. Such a man is happy during life, can there be a greater pleasure to a generous mind than to contribute to the happiness of thousands, what a feast is it to you to reflect, that the poor, whom you have relieved are every moment lifting up their hands to heaven in your favour, and blessing the day that you were born. Consult your own feelings, and they will tell you how great this pleasure is, and how worthy a Christian soul. Happy is the charitable man at the hour of death ; that hour of despair
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and anguish to those hard-hearted worldlings who kept the poor at a distance from them. Like the rich man in the Gospel, they feasted sumptuously every day, and did not suffer the poor to eat the crumbs that fell from their tables, they must consequently reflect in the bitterness of their souls, that as they have imitated his conduct, they must undergo the same torments.

But let us leave them in the hands of God; and turn to a fairer prospect. Happy the charitable man at this hour of danger, his body is in pain, but his soul is perfectly at ease; his days have been full of good works, and the Lord is not wanting to him at the end of his course. No; he refreshes him with the dew of heavenly consolation; he does for him what a tender parent would do for a beloved child in the time of sickness; he turns his bed and makes it easy to him. "Thou hast turned his bed for him in his infirmities." Can any thing more strongly express, how attentive the Almighty is to his faithful servants, who strive to imitate their divine Master in doing good, who shew to their fellow creatures, the love they have for their God. But this is not all, God will not give up the charitable man into the hands of his enemies; he will take him to himself. O this is the great and glorious reward, which surpasses our imaginations and conceptions, the never failing treasures of heaven, instead of the perishable riches of this world. O happy exchange! Christians, I have endeavoured to point out to you your duty, and to engage you to the observance thereof by the prevailing motive of your own interest. I believe you are thoroughly convinced, that it is highly incumbent on you to relieve your distressed brethren. However, to leave nothing undone

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on a matter of such importance, I mean to examine the principal reasons you commonly assign against the exercise of this divine virtue. I shall hasten on to the particular object of charity, which you ought to have in view on the present occasion.

THE SECOND PART.

As there is no duty prescribed to us, that does not meet with opposition, that of charity to the neighbour has many difficulties to encounter. Persons who are well able to make some provision for the poor, but are unwilling to do so, content themselves with apologies, which though specious indeed, cannot stand the test of a serious examination. We have, they say, several demands to answer; our situation in life brings on with it a multiplicity of expences; and what we are worth in the world is scarcely sufficient to defray them; we have large families to provide for; the times are bad; the number of the poor is very great, and it is impossible to relieve them all. We shall now endeavour to clear up these several points in such a manner, as not to be too rigorous on the one hand, nor too indulgent on the other. To their first objection I shall make the following answer, after having previously observed, that in this place, I only consider what the rich are bound to do in the ordinary necessities of the poor, such as are to be met with every day. It is true, there are several unavoidable expences attending your situation in life; and no one calls you to an account for what you lay out in so reasonable a manner; it is not required, that you descend from that state of ease and affluence, in which Providence has placed you, nor that you give to the poor, what is necessary for your decent support. At the same time, you must

must allow, that what is superfluous to you is the portion of the poor. This maxim is founded on the words of Saint Paul, who says, that the abundance of some ought to supply the necessities of others. The Fathers are unanimous on this point. Saint Augustine speaking of the superfluities of the rich, says, He that keeps such things by him, keeps what is not his own. Whilst thou spendest any thing idly says Saint Bernard, the poor lay claim to it, and say it is theirs. It is all inhumanly taken from them, whatever is thus mispent. But here the difficulties lie in determining what is superfluous. If your passions, indeed, be the judges in this case, they will find nothing superfluous, because they are ever craving and never to be satisfied. But if you consult reason and religion, they will enable you to form a proper judgment on the case. Whatever you throw away on vice and sensuality, is undoubtedly superfluous; you cannot suppose, that the Almighty has blessed you with temporal favours, that you might abuse them in this manner. If pride, vanity and other disorderly passions must be gratified; what will become of the poor, whom you are bound to relieve? Is it reasonable, that idle and criminal expences should take place of the works of mercy and charity? If this plea be once admitted, the more passions a man has to gratify, the more he will be exempt from the obligation of charity; that is to say, the more sins he commits, the less he will be obliged to expiate them by almsdeeds; the more he has provoked the divine vengeance, the less he will be obliged to disarm it. He has enough then to ruin himself eternally, and he has nothing to save his soul, or to purchase heaven. In the next place, you will tell me, that you have a large family to provide for. It is fit and reasonable, that you should make a provision for them. But

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after all, you find means for indulging your disorderly passions, and you cannot but know, that what is employed in this manner, ought in justice be given to the poor. Besides, if you were to have an increase to your family, you certainly would provide for every one of them. Why then do you not adopt the members of Jesus Christ into your family, and allow them, what you would allow to the supposed increase? Again the times are bad. But I suppose they are as bad for others as for you; they are even worse for many than they can be for you. If you suffer some inconvenience thereby, how great must be the distress of those, who are groaning every day under the weight of misery and affliction! But at the rate you go on, one can hardly suppose that the times are bad with regard to you. Do you not carry luxury and extravagance to as great lengths as ever? Your dress, your table, every thing about you does not feel the hardness of the times. Jesus Christ must feel it in his afflicted members. But the very circumstance of the times being bad, is a reason why you who suffer less, ought to exert yourself in favour of those who suffer most.

Lastly, you will say, that the number of the poor is very great, that it is impossible to relieve them all. But where is your reason, where is your religion, where is your humanity, when you argue at this rate? If you cannot relieve all who are distressed, why do you not relieve as many as you can? Ought not your charity to encrease in proportion to the general wants? Do you not contract fresh engagements when the number of the poor is multiplied? You see then, that the reason you assign for your want of charity to your fellow creatures, is the very reason, why you ought to have more of it. But why are there so many poor amongst us, it is because we do not
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relieve them. The primitive Christians laid down their riches at the feet of the Apostles, and there was not a poor person to be found among them. You are not commanded to do the same, only make some reserve for the poor and you will lessen their number. It is not surprizing, that the poor should be very numerous in a country circumstanced as ours has been, for a series of years. It is antient indeed; but it is young in respect to improvement. We had many mouths; but there were not many hands employed. Many were forced to be idle who, if properly encouraged, would earn a comfortable subsistence. Let us adore the will of Providence in the hardships we have laboured under. But now thanks to kind heaven, a fairer prospect opens to our view; the spirit of industry will revive; trade and commerce will lift their heads; our manufactures will visit the most distant climes, and be a copious source of wealth to this distressed nation. For, as soon as the scourge of war is averted from us, this kingdom will reap the fruits of the wise measures that have been adopted by the legislature for our relief.

Christians, I now come to the particular object I had principally in view, and beg leave to recommend it to your charitable consideration. This is a task I have undertaken with pleasure, happy to plead the cause of the poor, happy if your generous benefactions prove, that my feeble efforts have not been unsuccessful. You know, that I speak of your House of Industry, an institution which reflects honour on your City, an institution formed on a liberal plan without any regard to religious distinctions, if there be any distinction, it is evidently in our favour, as by much the greater number, who now enjoy the benefit of the charity are of our communion. Here, a decent provision is made for the poor

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tradesman, labourer or servant, who, worn out by old age and infirmity, is no longer able to earn his subsistence. Here, they, who have seen better days and are ashamed to beg, find a comfortable retreat. I have known some of them, who were once in as easy circumstances, as perhaps many in this respectable congregation. It was the will of heaven that they should experience the vicissitudes of life, and from a state of independence, fall into indigence and obscurity; what has happened to them may happen to others. Now, let me suppose, that some of you here present were to place yourselves in their situation, and then say, what would you wish to be done unto you. Act on this principle, be directed by this golden rule: Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you: and then I am confident that you will open your hearts and your hands to relieve them. Here, persons of another description, who, though capable of employment, would, if left to themselves, spend their days in idleness and disorder, are subject to the salutary restraints of order and regularity, and employed to advantage. Here, there is a place allotted those, who have the misfortune to be deprived of that noble gift of God, which principally distinguishes man from the brute, who are a prey to the greatest of all human miseries, who, not being free agents, are not accountable for their actions, the result of a blind ungovernable instinct, necessarily are doomed to a state of confinement, the best adapted to the dreadful malady they labour under. Have we not seen some of them, by care and attention, restored to the primitive soundness of their understandings, and qualified once more to become useful members of society? Others, less violent, are treated with that lenity and compassion due to human beings, whom the Almighty, in the unsearchable, but adorable dispensations of his

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providence,

providence, has permitted to be born idiots. You see then, Christians, how many evils it is in your power to alleviate, or remove, and will you not be grateful for the blessings you enjoy? Will you not prove to the world, that you have hearts to feel for such a complication of human woe? Will you not step forward in support of an institution so comprehensive in its plan, so beneficial in its tendency, so pregnant with good as to challenge the approbation of heaven itself? Notwithstanding the many and obvious advantages of this charity, I know that for a series of years, it has not been favoured with those public marks of attention to which it is so justly entitled. Some will say, that as the legislature has been pleased, in its wisdom, to point out a mode for providing for its establishment; they, as individuals, do not see what additional claim it can have on them for its support. But let me suppose, that the benevolent intentions of the legislature are not carried into effect, that only part of the sum, originally intended, is paid in; that even were the whole of it collected and regularly received, it would from the encreasing numbers of the poor, from the high price of provisions, and every other necessary of life, be found inadequate to the purpose? Then the objection falls to the ground. What I first advanced as suppositions, I now state as facts; and therefore, in the name of the God of charity, whose unworthy minister I am, I call upon you to supply the deficiency. But you will say, why do we see swarms of sturdy, strolling beggars infesting the streets, shops, private houses, and the several places of public worship? Is not this a proof that the charity is not properly attended to? For was it not one of the main objects of the institution, to compel vagrant beggars to a fixed residence, and confine them to such employments, as may prove useful to the public? To this I reply,

that

that the remedy is in your own hands. For I am authorized by the chief and acting governor of the house to give you every assurance, that if you support and cooperate with him, effectual measures shall be instantly adopted, to have the nuisances you complain of removed out of your way, and then, surely, your satisfaction must be complete.

I fear, Christians, that I have trespassed on your patience, by entering into a tedious detail. The only apology I can make is, that I conceived it to be necessary to efface the unfavourable impressions, which may tend to cool or extinguish the sacred flame of charity in your breasts. I have every reason to hope that you will, with the blessing of heaven, keep it alive, and make it operate in such a manner, as may best promote the interests of the charity and the everlasting interests of your immortal souls. Thanks for ever to the Father of mercies; you have examples enough to stimulate your exertions. Your brethren of all denominations have already signalized themselves in the cause of charity and humanity; they have a right to expect that you will cooperate with them in the godlike work, and convince them that you are animated with the same sentiments.

But what words can express the acknowledgments we owe to our most gracious Sovereign, the common father of all his people, who has earnestly and successfully recommended his faithful Roman Catholic subjects of this kingdom, to the wisdom and liberality of parliament. He shall live for ever in our hearts. May the King of kings, who holds in his hands the dominion of all empires, direct his councils, fight his battles, crown him with victory, and enable him to restore peace, so essential to the happiness of all his wishes. May he long preserve a life, so dear to all his subjects. May we,

in return, prove ourselves deserving of the favours conferred on us ; distinguish ourselves by that loyal, peaceable and orderly conduct which the principles of our religion inspire and command.

Dear Christians, I most earnestly entreat you, to recommend yourselves to the special care and protection of heaven by the works of mercy, and charity, by your own immediate attention to the grand object of charity, which I have now pointed out to you. Embrace the opportunity that is offered you, of giving to God the most acceptable proof of your love, by relieving your distressed fellow creatures. Engage so many powerful intercessors in your behalf, and make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into the bright abodes of immortal bliss. Honour the Lord with your substance, and with the first fruits of your increase ; give him what you owe him, and what you owe the poor. Can you make a better use of your perishable riches which are liable to slip out of your hands by so many accidents, and which you must part with at last, whatever pains you may take to acquire and preserve them. Send a part of them to that place, where the rust doth not consume, nor the moth devour, where they shall produce an hundred fold, where they shall be safe from all accidents. Remember, that blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Remember that there is judgment without mercy for him, who hath not shewn mercy. Nothing less than your eternal salvation is here concerned. What would it avail a man to gain the whole world, if he should lose his own soul. Consider the obligations you are under to your Redeemer, who loved you so much as to lay down his life for you. He commands you now to repay them all, by your charitable attention to his poor representatives. May your hearts take full possession of the grand duty of Christian charity.

May

May you on this day exhibit a bright pattern of this heaven-born virtue to the honour of God, the edification of your neighbour, the relief and comfort of your indigent fellow creatures, and the salvation of your immortal souls. Thus, will you prove yourselves to be true and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ: you will draw down his choicest blessings on your heads, and merit to hear from him these reviving words: I was hungry and you gave me to eat, thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you visited me. Come, then, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Amen.

S E R M O N XXXI.

ON DEATH.

In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin. Ecclesiasticus, vii. 40.

ON these days of salvation set apart by the church, nothing, my dear Christians, can be more to your purpose, than to retire now and then from the noise and bustle of the world, and seriously to reflect on those great truths, which have an immediate connexion with your eternal welfare. The consideration of death in particular, would be a source of heavenly wisdom, if the idea of it were strongly impressed on your minds. Your misfortune is, that you study to banish it from your thoughts; all your diversions and amusements are calculated to make you forget it, and to lull you asleep on the very brink of destruction. If by not thinking on death, it were in your power to ward off the blow, this might be an apology for your conduct. But while you do not think on it, it is rapidly advancing towards you; you are totally unprepared to receive it; and you expose yourselves to the dreadful consequences of an unhappy death,

being unprepared

death, and is this a rational part for a Christian to act?

There is no wise man, who will not consider the close of his mortal life as a solemn and important event. Never to reflect on what deserves the most serious reflections, and must unavoidably take place, is the pitiful resource of a weak and giddy mind. O children of men, how long will you suffer yourselves to be deluded by the false charms of this wretched world! Do you not see the dreadful havock which death makes every day among the human race? Even in the midst of you, and under your own eyes, do you not see thousands drop at your right, and thousands at your left. Do you not see the young and the old, the rich and the poor, fall a prey to this common leveller of all? As the leaves fall from the trees at the approach of winter, as one wave passes on another, so one generation of men is succeeded by another, which disappears in its turn. A new world rises on the ruins of the old, and this new world will soon pass away. What are become of the days, weeks, months and years we have spent on earth? They are gone; they appear to us as a dream which leaves no traces behind: one period of time insensibly steals upon us after another. We are all borne down by the rapid stream of time towards the vast ocean of eternity. Now, when you have so many striking images of death before you, when you have so many symptoms of mortality within you, is it not strange and unaccountable that you should ever lose sight of it? That every silly trifle should be able to divert your attention from the consideration of that great and only affair, on which your all depends? But, you will say, subjects of this nature are apt to damp your spirits, to chill your blood, and to overcast your mind with a melancholy gloom. Be it so, Christians, distasteful remedies are very often salutary.

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You are dancing through life in a round of diffipation and folly, and it is necessary to put a stop to your career. You live, as if this life was never to have an end; as if the next was never to have a beginning, and is it not necessary to remind you of the dangerous consequences of such a life? The true reason then, why you are averse from indulging all serious reflexions is, because you are wedded to the world, wedded to your passions, wedded to sin. Yes; sin is the sting of death; pluck out the sting, and death will lose its terrors. You will have nothing to fear, but you will have every thing to hope for, if you make the image of death familiar to you, if you descend in spirit into the grave while you are living, if you establish a solid and lasting peace with the Father of mercies, and dispose yourselves for the unspeakable joys that await you in the heavenly Jerusalem. This, my dear Christians, is the best plan for you to follow. You will find, that death is an excellent counsellor. Yes, the gloomy mansions of the dead, will send forth rays of truth and wisdom to enlighten your minds, and direct you through the dangerous navigation of this life to the haven of eternal bliss.

I believe that you are convinced, that no subject can be more useful or interesting to you, than that which calls for your immediate attention, as it is very extensive in its nature, and comprises several important truths, I shall reduce what I have to say on it, to this single proposition: the frequent and serious consideration of death, is a most powerful motive to engage us to avoid evil and to do good. It is a most powerful motive to engage us to avoid evil, this will be the subject of the first part; and to do good, the subject of the second; as on these two points the whole of our duty ultimately rests.

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lives, who canst, whenever thou pleasest, break these vessels of clay and reduce them to dust, give us a relish for those awful truths, which forcibly convince us of our misery, and thy greatness. May the consideration of death be to us a source of life. In all our works may we remember our last end, and we shall never sin. May we be ready to answer thee, whenever thou shalt be pleased to call us from this earthly habitation to appear before thee, O Judge of the living and the dead. We humbly beseech thee to hear our prayers through the intercession of that blessed Virgin, whose life buried in holy solitude and contemplation, ensured to her a death precious in thy sight, and prepared her for that eminent degree of glory to which she is raised in heaven. We salute her in the words of the Angel, saying, *Hail Mary.*

THE FIRST PART.

The principal source of our spiritual disorders, is an excessive attachment to sensible objects. The lively impressions which they make on the imagination, weaken and corrupt the heart, and from the corruption of the heart, a mist arises, which darkens and blinds the understanding. The world has an imposing aspect; its false splendors catch the eye; its riches, honours, and pleasures seem to ensure real happiness to those who are in possession or enjoyment of them. Such are the notions of the worldling, the ambitious man, and the man of pleasure; because men of this stamp keep the thoughts of death at a distance from them. But if they attended to the lessons of death, they would soon be undeceived. Yes, death strips the world of its boasted charms, exposes the emptiness and vanity of its riches, honours, and pleasures; and makes the deluding phantoms, dissolve into air. Let us then go to the school of death, and learn

learn wisdom; and first, let us hear from this great teacher of truth what we ought to think of all earthly riches.

You must die; to prove the certainty of death would be an insult to your understanding. You must then bid adieu to the world for ever. Your riches you must leave behind you, you cannot carry them to the grave. How soon this may happen, you cannot tell. You may be young enough to live, but you are old enough to die. How then can you set your hearts on those perishable riches, which are ready to slip out of your hands every moment? Is the possession of them ensured to you, and yet you labour and toil, you fatigue and distress yourselves in the pursuit of them, as if you were confident that you were to possess them for ever, and enjoy an immortality upon earth. Consider that the stronger your attachments are, the more painful the separating stroke will be. Perhaps, your ill-acquired riches, will be the source of your eternal reprobation. Beware, lest you value yourselves on such schemes and plans, as may be applauded by the world, and condemned by your God. Do the cries of widows and orphans ascend to heaven against you? Do you keep from your workmen and labourers, what they have dearly earned by the sweat of their brow? Do you take an unfair advantage of the distresses of your neighbours? Do you keep whole families pining in misery and indigence, by your unjust and uncharitable delays in paying what you owe them? and can you be so hard-hearted as to indulge yourselves in luxury and extravagance at the expence of the poor? Can it be a pleasure to a generous mind to rise on the ruins of his fellow creatures? Consider what you will think of all this at the hour of your death. Then your passion will subside, then your conscience will be awakened, then your guilt will stare you in the face.

face. O death, how bitter thou art! Read the heart of a worldling and see what passes within him at this awful moment! what a scene of horror and despair would present itself to our view! Forbid it heaven, that any one of us here present should on his death-bed be tormented with this melancholy reflection: I have made a fortune, but alas! it is the fruit of injustice and extortion. What reparation can I make? I will enjoin it as an obligation on my heirs. But what if his heirs should never think of fulfilling his intentions? The probability is, that as soon as he draws his last breath, they will begin to quarrel about the division of his substance; and when they cannot agree among themselves, spend the best part of it, in a tedious and expensive suit. But let me suppose that your conscience stands clear of any but fair and honourable means, do you hold yourselves accountable for the use you make of those temporal blessings with which the Almighty has crowned your honest industry? Do you consider yourselves as stewards to the great and universal proprietor? Do you give daily proofs of your gratitude to heaven by holding out the hand of charity to the poor representatives of Jesus Christ? Do you send before you a part of your perishable riches to that place, where the rust doth not consume, nor the moth devour? Is it the study of your lives to secure to yourselves lasting riches in heaven? If so, you may look on death, and smile: you may meet it with perfect serenity and composure of mind, and close your eyes to this world in peace. But if you are deaf to the cries of the poor; if you steel your hearts and shut your hands against their necessities, while you answer every demand of luxury and extravagance; and like the rich man in the Gospel, you feast sumptuously every day, and suffer not the poor to eat the crumbs that fall from your tables, Oh, must you not reflect in the bitterness

ness of your souls, that as you imitated his conduct, you must undergo the same torments. Such, Christians, are the instructions which death conveys to us; they must be salutary if properly attended to. Let us now hear from this awful monitor what we ought to think of all worldly honours and distinctions.

You hold a certain rank in life: you, therefore, consider yourself as a man of consequence: the world is too apt to flatter you into an opinion so agreeable to self-love. You meet with marks of respect and deference wherever you appear; whatever you say is listened to with attention: you value yourself on all this, as if it were a tribute paid to your real and intrinsic merit, and not to your external circumstances. What a delicious feast is here prepared to feed your pride? Accordingly, you swell and look big at the thought of your superiority and pre-eminence. You cannot bear the slightest neglect; and you treat with the utmost indifference and contempt, those whom you call your inferiours, but whom nature has made your equals. But go to the grave, and there learn to cool the fever of your pride. Will death pay any respect to your birth, rank and fortune? Will it spare your pampered body, will it not blend it with that common earth, which you trample under your feet with such an air of haughtiness and arrogance. Consider not what you are, but what you are to be. Get acquainted with your true family, and say to corruption, thou art my father; and to the worms, thou art my mother and my sister. Go and visit the tombs of those who made a greater figure in the world than you; and after all their boasted exploits where is the difference now between the lords of the earth and their meanest slaves? They lie down together in the same undistinguished dust.

Thus,

Thus, death levels all worldly distinctions, and confounds the pride of man. But will the young and the thoughtless libertine listen to the grave instructions of death? His passions are strong, and his reason weak; his blood boils in his veins; his breast beats to the enchanting sounds of the river of pleasure. If ever he reflects on death, he considers it at a great distance from him; he will tell you, that every thing has its season, that youth is the season for pleasure; that he will grow wise when he grows old; that then he will have time enough to laugh at his past follies. But what if he should be surprised and cut down like a flower in the midst of his disorders, summoned to judgment with all his sins on his head; would not this be a sad disappointment? He says that he will repent when he grows old, his repentance then is annexed to a condition which perhaps will never take place; and therefore, if he should not live to grow old he is lost for ever! Let me even suppose that he will arrive at the term which he so confidently marks out for himself, can he have an absolute certainty that he will repent? No: daily experience convinces how strong evil habits are. They grow up with our growth and strengthen with our strength; they become a second nature, and take such deep root in the heart, that totally to extirpate them is next to an impossibility. How many old sinners complain most bitterly, that they cannot indulge themselves in those vices for which they were remarkable in the early stages of life? The power then of committing certain sins may be no more; and the will as strong and perverse as ever. It is, therefore, the business of the young in particular, to watch over themselves, not to give loose reins to their vicious inclinations, nor lay the foundation of a lasting and painful sorrow. Can they imagine, that the Almighty, who has at all times an indisputable right to their homage
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and fidelity, will be satisfied with the latter days of a life worn out in the service of iniquity? Would not such considerations allay the heat of their youthful passions, bring down their high flow of animal spirits to a proper level, and recal them from these evil courses which lead to perdition? If they seriously reflected on death, would they impiously scoff at those sacred truths, which the rest of mankind revere? Would they affect to despise religious observances, which are calculated to promote their temporal and eternal welfare? Little do they think, that their pertness and presumption disgrace them in the eyes of all men of sense. Thus, while they fancy, that they are giving proofs of a superior understanding, they expose the weakness and shallowness of their minds; but let death knock at the door of one those bold adventurers in life, oh! will he not tremble at the awful summons? Then his profane sallies, his intemperate mirth, and all the disorders of his sinful life, rend his heart with anguish and remorse. But is his repentance sincere? Is it such a one, as through the merits of Christ will wash away all the stains of his soul? We know not, the searcher of hearts only knows. The dreadful uncertainty of a death-bed repentance, is enough to deter any reasonable man from making the experiment. We know, that after death, judgment immediately follows; that sentence is to be pronounced either for or against us, in consequence of our good or evil actions. What then have we to do, but to improve our time to the best advantage, that all our days may be filled with good works, that we may be entitled to a glorious reward, when the night comes in which no one can labour? What would it avail a man, says our blessed Saviour, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Would it not then be the height of folly to give up your souls for a vile shortlived pleasure, which the beasts can enjoy.

enjoy. You see then, Christians, that the consideration of death is a most powerful motive to engage you to avoid evil; it is also a most powerful motive to engage you to do good, the subject of the second part.

THE SECOND PART.

So great is our weakness, while we are chained to this mortal body, that we stand in need of the most powerful motives to keep up in our minds such a lively sense of our duty, as may bear us up against that innate corruption, which perpetually tends to vice and disorder. Now, of all the motives which religion suggests, none can more strongly influence our practice than the consideration of death. For when we reflect, that we are here in a state of probation, that we have no lasting dwelling place on earth, that we are hastening to our true home as fast as the wings of time can carry us; reason tells us, that we ought not to suffer our affections to be engrossed by the things of this world; that we ought to raise our hearts above all transitory scenes, and fix them on those solid and everlasting goods, which are prepared for us in our heavenly country. Another consequence of the same reflection is, that our whole lives ought to be a preparation for death; that we ought to hold ourselves in constant readiness, assured, that we must die, not knowing the day nor the hour.

Our blessed Saviour, who truly knew the heart man, and what would make the most powerful impression on it, often inculcates the same instructions. He even says, that he will come, when we least suspect him, and what is the conclusion to be drawn from the dreadful uncertainty we are in? Watch at all times, and suffer not yourselves to be surprised. Have your lamps trimmed and full

full of oil to receive the bridegroom. Walk, while you have the light of the day to guide your footsteps, and wait not for the night in which you can do no work. Hasten to bear fruit for the time of the harvest is at hand. Hasten to improve your talents to the best advantage, for the master will soon come, and demand a strict account of the use you make of them. You are invited to a great banquet, do not reject the invitation. If you do, others will be called in to fill up your places, and the master of the feast will exclude you for ever. Now, if the consideration of death ought to redouble the fervour of the just man, and support the penitent in his pious labours, what an impression ought it not to make on the heart of a sinner, who has not as yet broken his chains? Oh, my dear Brethren, you cannot be so lost to all sense of reason, as to be resolved to die in your sins. No, you shudder at the very idea of it. Hear then the voice of death sounding in your ears: delay not to be converted to the Lord, nor put it off from day to day. How long will you continue to abuse the patience and the goodness of your God? Is it not an act of mercy in him to have spared you so long, and given you so much time for repentance? He might, if he pleased, have cut you off in the midst of your sinful excesses, and hurry you away to judgment without giving you time to say: God have mercy on me. This has been the case of thousands, and it may be yours. Is it not to be dreaded, that your obstinacy and impenitence will force your heavenly Father to withdraw his mercy from you, and make you a striking example of his justice. But you will say, I have some weighty affairs to settle; I am deeply engaged in business; when I get over certain difficulties which are now in my way, then I will be at leisure to attend to my spiritual concerns; and

and is the salvation of your soul an affair of so little consequence, that it must give way to every thing else? Oh, if a matter of property were in question, you would not argue at this wild state. If you were to forfeit a considerable estate, unless you immediately exerted yourself in recovering it, would you lose a single moment? Is there any time but the present, that you can call your own. Why then do you let so many precious hours slip away from you, without turning them to a proper account? This may be the last sermon you will ever hear. This very night (can you think of it without trembling?) your soul may be demanded of you. These salutary lessons are necessary even for the just, to keep alive in their hearts that zeal for good works, that divine fire which our Saviour came to kindle upon earth. Surrounded with enemies on every side, they are left defenceless and exposed to every danger. There is not a moment in which even the just man may not sin; there is no sin after the commission of which he may not immediately die; there is not therefore a single moment that does not call for constant attention and vigilance.

This, Christians, is the heavenly wisdom which we may all learn in the school of death. Was it not the serious and frequent consideration of death and eternity, that supported the primitive Christians, under the severe and bloody persecutions which the power of the Cæsars and the rage of hell raised against them? In the same school were formed so many Christian heroes, who nobly despised the world and its false joys; who died to themselves every day, that they might live to their God; whose penitential rigours are censured by the nominal Christians of those degenerate days, as bordering on enthusiasm and extravagance. These worldlings, these criminal men, are strangers to the spirit of God; they feel not the force

of that divine principle which animates the saints, and engages them to lead such extraordinary lives so very different from their own. Let the penitent meditate on death, and he will think nothing of the labours he undergoes to purchase an eternity of bliss. Fasting, prayer, and other good works enjoined on him will be his comfort and delight. For he considers them all, as so many means of appeasing the wrath of heaven, and repairing the disorders of his past life. Not satisfied with what is absolutely required of him, he will add voluntary mortifications, he will crucify the flesh and the concupiscence thereof: he will bear the glorious marks of the cross of Christ on that body, which bore the infamous marks of sin. The only matter of his sorrow will be, that he did not begin to serve his God earlier; that he did not consecrate to him the first fruits of his life; that there was any portion of his precious time spent in the vanities which the world and its pleasures held out to him. O Christians, perhaps your own guilty soul may be demanded of you this night: return, then, O return to the Father of mercies! make one generous effort, and your Redeemer will stretch out his all-powerful arm to raise you out of the abyss of sin, in which you lie buried so many years! Then will tears of contrition gush from your eyes; happy tears, which, mingled with the blood of Jesus, will wash away all the stains of your souls. Then you will enjoy that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Then you will know and feel how good your God is to those who love him.

Christians, how happy would you be, were the thoughts of death always present to your minds. Order and regularity would appear in your lives, instead of that disorder and irregularity which disgrace them. You would act on a large comprehen-

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five plan, which, not confined to the things of this world, would take in the great and momentous concerns of eternity. . Your conduct would be steady and uniform; your deliberations prudent and just, and your actions regulated by the unerring standard of heavenly wisdom. On those trying occasions, when conscience would lead one way, and self-interest another, you would have one fixed and invariable principle to determine your choice. You will say to yourselves, what shall I think of this at the hour of my death? Were I to die this very day, could I soberly accept the offer that is made me? Will my acceptance be a source of grief or joy, when I shall be stretched on my death bed, and at the point of dissolution? Will I then applaud or condemn myself for it? A violent temptation rushes in like a storm, and makes an impression on your senses; your rebellious flesh wars against the spirit; your heart is all on fire. What better safeguard can you have in this hour of danger, than the remembrance of death? If you mean to cure yourselves of an excessive desire for the things of this world, and to acquire that disengagement of heart, which ought to be the characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ, look stedfastly on the grave and consider yourselves as just stepping into it. In this powerful meditation all your past illusions will be dissipated; the world will appear as nothing in your eyes. Your faith will point out to you those solid and substantial goods, which will fill the whole capacity of your souls. Happy the man, who has learned to die, before death seizes upon him; who has done the business for which he was sent into the world, and has nothing more to do but to die.

Preserve us, O my God, from that greatest of all evils, an unprovided death. In thy infinite wisdom, thou hast concealed from us the day and the hour, that we might be ever watchful, ever on our guard

against any surprise. May we answer thy gracious views! May the thought of death sink deep into our hearts, preside over our actions, and be our never-failing antidote against the false joys of the world, against its dangerous maxims and examples. May we conduct ourselves as mortal and accountable creatures. May we, in our several stations, faithfully comply with our respective duties. May we sow the seeds of good works in this life and reap the fruits of them in the next; fruits of everlasting glory and unspeakable happiness. Amen.

F I N I S.

